

BACK - BENCHER AND CHAIRMAN

Some Parliamentary Reminiscences of
LORD HEMINGFORD, K.B.E., P.C.

*formerly Sir Dennis Herbert, Chairman of
Committees and Deputy Speaker*

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTORY AUTOBIOGRAPHY	I
II.	MY FIRST ELECTION TO, AND EARLY DAYS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS	II
III.	THE COALITION PARLIAMENT OF 1919-22	15
IV.	THE RESIGNATION OF SPEAKER LOWTHER AND THE ELECTION OF SPEAKER WHITLEY	25
V.	THE LAW OF PROPERTY BILL, 1922 (THE BIRKENHEAD ACT)	34
VI.	THE END OF THE COALITION, AND THE PARLIAMENT OF 1923	41
VII.	PRAYERS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ITS PLACES OF WORSHIP AND ATTENDANCES AT DIVINE SERVICE	44
VIII.	A GREAT SPEAKERSHIP, E. A. FITZROY, 1928-43	49
IX.	MY APPOINTMENT AS CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY SPEAKER. DUTIES AND INCIDENTS OF THE OFFICE.	69
X.	THE PARLIAMENT OF 1923, AND THE MATRIMONIAL CAUSES BILL	82
XI.	THE PARLIAMENT OF 1924	95
XII.	THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION: A VISIT TO THE U.S.A. IN 1925	97
XIII.	THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL 1926	100
XIV.	PARLIAMENT AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND. THE NEW PRAYER BOOK DEBATES IN 1927 AND 1928, AND OTHER MATTERS	108
XV.	DELEGATED LEGISLATION	119
XVI.	VISIT TO INDIA	124
XVII.	SOME MINOR INCIDENTS IN THE CHAIR	129
XVIII.	THE STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER 1931	134
XIX.	THE FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 1931	140
XX.	THE GOLD STANDARD (AMENDMENT) BILL 1931	154
XXI.	THE SECOND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, FORMED IN NOVEMBER 1931	159

CHAP.	PAGE
XXII. CONVERSION OF THE 5 PER CENT. WAR LOAN, 1932 . . .	167
XXIII. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA BILL OF 1935 . . .	170
XXIV. THE SILVER JUBILEE OF KING GEORGE V AND HIS DEATH AND FUNERAL	178
XXV. THE ABDICATION, 1936	182
XXVI. MUNICH, 1938	191
XXVII. THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, 1939	201
XXVIII. AIR-RAID PRECAUTIONS IN PARLIAMENT AND AIR-RAID DAMAGE AT THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT . . .	216
XXIX. THE APPOINTMENT OF WINSTON CHURCHILL AS PRIME MINISTER IN MAY, 1940	226
XXX. MY RESIGNATION, 1943	233
XXXI. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON THE WAR PERIOD . . .	238
INDEX	243

FRONTISPIECE

THE RT. HON. LORD HEMINGFORD, K.B.E., from a painting by
George Harcourt, R.A.

PREFACE

WHEN it became known that I was leaving the House of Commons, and many friends in the House were kindly expressing their regret, it gave me something of a shock when one of them said to me, "It's a good thing you are leaving the House." Naturally I asked why, and when he replied "Because now you can write a book about your time in the House," I said I was determined not to do that, and I meant it.

He and others urged me, however, to do it, saying not only that they and many others would be interested, but that the position I had occupied in the House would make a book by me quite a different thing from one by an ordinary member, and that it was my duty to write it. Though I felt incompetent to produce a book which would be all they expected, their arguments prevailed and I determined to do my best.

I have had many difficulties to deal with. There were troubles resulting from the War, such as the restrictions on paper, and the many other difficulties from which publishers suffered; moreover, I had lost and could not replace my secretary, and even the occasional services of a typist were difficult to obtain.

But in addition to these, two things should be mentioned. Firstly, for many reasons, the book must be reasonably short, and to deal with a quarter of a century of a busy and eventful Parliamentary life in a book of about two hundred and fifty or three hundred pages was not easy. I have been forced to omit all reference to many important events and many matters of interest about which I should have liked to write. Then, too, I was anxious that so far as possible I should avoid political partizanship, and it is difficult for one who has been a convinced, if moderate, member of a political party, to write of his experiences in Parliament without laying himself open to accusations of party bias; but in this respect my experiences in the Chair for a long period have, I hope, enabled me to avoid unfairness to colleagues holding political views with which I do not agree.

If what I have written should increase interest in the House of Commons and in its conduct during the momentous years of peace and war since 1918, I shall be well satisfied. I can at least plead that my book is the work of one who in these years has learnt to love the House of Commons and to feel increased sympathy with and love for his fellow-members of all parties.

I must thank many good friends in the political world without whose encouragement the book would never have been published. I trust they may not find reason to regret their responsibility for its publication.

I am grateful to Sir Gilbert Campion, the Clerk of the House, and his assistants, and other officials of the House, who have assisted me in reducing the number of my mistakes, but have no responsibility for those which no doubt I still have made ; included with them should be my old friend Sir Frederick Liddell, now retired, but lately Counsel to Mr. Speaker, and as such the guide and adviser for many years of the Chairman of Ways and Means.

Sir Ralph Verney, Secretary to three successive Speakers, has given me much assistance of a kind which few but he could have done. I am much indebted to Viscountess Daventry for enabling me to print the late Speaker FitzRoy's note of his speech at Burford Priory, and for other help in regard to him.

Last, but by no means least, must I express the debt I owe to some old colleagues in the House for help they have given me in regard to matters referred to in which they were personally concerned ; they would probably prefer not to be mentioned by name, and it would be an ill return for their kindness if by mentioning their names I caused readers to think they were in any degree responsible for what I have written.

HEMINGFORD.

WATFORD, HERTS,
December, 1945.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

THIS book is not intended to be of an autobiographical nature, but rather a history of events I have seen and things I have learnt in and about the House of Commons: but those who read it may have some desire to know "what manner of man is this" who writes these things, and how came he to take an active interest in Politics and to become a member for many years of the House of Commons.

I was the eldest of a family of six sons of a country parson: my father and mother both came of good families, but neither of them ever had more than very small private means. As my father's living was at best a very poor one, and the endowment was agricultural land, for some years unlet, and agricultural rents were very low, we knew what it meant to be poor! But no one ever had better parents; they brought us up very well and sensibly, gave us the best education they could, and left us free to choose how we would earn our living.

The rectory, close to the river-bank, was a charming and delightful home. After being six or seven years at private schools, at the age of 14, with the help of a scholarship, I went to an excellent minor public school, the King's Cathedral Grammar School at Ely. From there, again with the help of an exhibition, I went to Wadham College, Oxford. After taking my degree I was articled to a solicitor, a friend of relations of my mother's, who was the head of a well-known firm of family solicitors in Gray's Inn. Soon after being admitted as a solicitor, I went as a managing clerk to, and in a few years became a junior partner in, the firm of which I have been a member ever since.

I first came to be interested in political affairs as quite a small boy at home, partly through listening to my father's conversations with (among others) a great-uncle, who used to pay long visits to us, and with whom I often stayed for fairly long periods: he was Provost of King's College, Cambridge, and before becoming Provost of King's, had been for many years Lower Master at Eton, and was thus intimately acquainted with many of the great statesmen and politicians of those times, including Gladstone, who had been a pupil of his at Eton: both my father and this uncle were strong, but not bigoted, Conserva-

tives : so indeed were most of my friends and all my relations, except an uncle, whom we were all very fond of in spite of, as we thought, the regrettable fact that he had become a Liberal : there were, however, among our neighbours some local notables who belonged to a group of rather rich nonconformist Liberals. Notwithstanding, therefore, my Conservative upbringing I learnt, even in those days, that—politics apart—some Liberals could be, in schoolboy language, “quite decent fellows !”

At Ely I joined the School Debating Society and was secretary of it for some years : our debates were sometimes of a political nature, though that was the exception rather than the rule, the majority of the boys being Conservatives.

Before I left school I had the experience of helping in a small way in more than one Parliamentary Election and I enjoyed attending political meetings of both sides. My earliest recollection of opening my mouth at such a meeting was at one addressed by an Irish Home Rule M.P., when I summoned up courage to ask him a question : his polite but very sarcastic reply was to the effect that he was quite sure anyone with the obvious knowledge and intelligence of his very young questioner was fully aware that the answer was so and so : I have forgotten both the question and the answer : the answer did not satisfy me, and I knew the proper supplementary question to put ; but the speaker's polite sarcasm finished me off, and I had not the pluck to pursue the matter : I have no doubt discretion was the better part on that occasion ! However, apart from electioneering, I developed during my years at Ely a definite interest in political affairs, partly as a result of my leisure-time reading ; the *Waverley* Novels and other historical novels led me to a love of history and more particularly of constitutional history. I began to have theories and, in a modest and not very helpful way, to form ideas, scarcely fit to be called ambitions, as to the lines on which I should like to go through life.

It is tempting to me to write much of Oxford in my four years there as an undergraduate ; but that would mean too long a digression ! I was fortunate in the selection by my parents of Wadham as my college : they made this selection in the belief that it was then one of the best of the smaller colleges suitable for a poor man.

I at once joined the Union and the College Debating Society, and became a fairly frequent speaker in their debates : one reason for this was my determination to overcome, if I could, my extreme

nervousness. I was very shy and nervous by nature and to get on my feet and make a speech, of any kind to any audience, was always a hard task for me.

May I digress for a moment on this subject of nervousness in public speaking, about which there is a popular but often very mistaken idea, that because a man is a member of Parliament or otherwise accustomed to making speeches, it is no trouble to him to do so, and that he does not in the least mind being called upon at a moment's notice to make some brief unimportant speech : there are happy men of whom that is true : but I know well how often the opposite is the case : this characteristic of nervousness may be a cause of unhappiness and frequent headaches to the man who has it, but like other trying things, it has its good effects ; it tends to make a man less careless of his words, and also to prevent him from speaking so often or at such length, as to become a greater bore to his hearers than he would otherwise be. As an example of this nervousness I might quote the case of the late Sir Archibald Boyd-Carpenter who was one of the most experienced, and by common consent one of the most brilliant, platform speakers of his time : he was for many years a close and intimate personal friend of mine : an ardent politician with a high sense of duty, he made many great and effective speeches at very large public meetings, for which he was in great demand ; but though he controlled it, he never lost his nervousness : his speeches were, I know, a great strain upon him, and indeed contributed largely to his death at a comparatively early age : during his long membership of the House of Commons he spoke comparatively seldom in the House, mainly owing to his nervousness. This leads me to an observation upon the House as a forum for public speaking : though there is no more kindly and indulgent audience in the world, to an earnest and well-meaning speaker, it is in some ways one of the most difficult audiences for a nervous man to address : personally I never overcame my nervousness in the House of Commons and have often said and felt that I would sooner have to address a crowded meeting in the Albert Hall than the House of Commons. A member of the House may have an intimate knowledge of the particular subject on which he is speaking : yet he can seldom feel certain that there is not some quiet and unobtrusive member who knows a great deal more about it than he does : moreover, his speech will be recorded in the official reports, and may be read either soon or years later by interested persons, so that he is liable at any time to have his

words brought up against him. I have selected Boyd-Carpenter as an example of a nervous speaker, partly because he is unhappily no longer with us, and it might be undesirable to name in this connection persons still living; but I know of more than one great statesman still living who suffers from nervousness of this kind: some may well say, would that there were more of them!

To resume my story of my days at Oxford. I became a member while still a "freshman" (an unusual honour) of the Conservative Club known as the Strafford Club, which in addition to the Earl of Strafford, after whom it was called, regarded as its patron saints, Charles I and Archbishop Laud: it held its meetings weekly during term time, at which papers were read by one of its members, on which discussion followed: it was not quite such a reactionary body as might have been supposed: but it prided itself on its Tory and High Church principles, and a well-known Conservative undergraduate who was proposed for membership was blackballed on account of his being a Lutheran! It was an interesting and instructive body, limited in numbers and exclusive in its membership: all its members were keen and active Conservatives, and they, from time to time, entertained and were addressed by well-known members of Parliament: one of the outstanding occasions of this kind was when Sir Richard Webster, the Attorney-General (afterwards Lord Alverstone), was the guest of the Club, and made the first important public speech on the then just published Report of the Parnell Commission.

Owing to illness, I was prevented from taking "Honour Moderations" and as a result I was advised to abandon my intention to take "Greats" as my final School, and I therefore determined to read History. I selected the seventeenth century as my special period and the Great Rebellion as my special subject. To complete a sad part of my story, I hoped and was encouraged to believe that I might get a first class: as I afterwards learnt, I was on my written papers a doubtful first, being marked A — or B +. But unfortunately (for which I will not attempt excuses) I came down badly in my viva voce examination, with the result that I only got a third. It was a bitter blow to me at the time which was but little softened by the very kind letters of sympathy which I received from the Warden of Wadham and from my two principal History tutors, C. R. L. Fletcher and George Wakeling. But though it seriously upset my plans, my years of reading and hard work not only gave me pleasure at the

time, but have conducted to my subsequent happiness and to such success as I have been able to achieve in later life.

Among those whose lectures I attended were S. R. Gardiner, the learned historian of the seventeenth century, Charles Firth and two then young dons, whom I was afterwards to know as friends and colleagues in the House of Commons, Sir John Marriott and Sir Charles Oman. I also took the opportunities I had of hearing other lectures or addresses by great men, one of which was a lecture by Professor James Bryce on the Constitution of the United States ; the closing words of which I well remember to this effect : " You will realize, gentlemen, from what I have said that the American Constitution failed to achieve the ideals of its authors, and is in fact practically unworkable : but the Americans are a wonderful people : they work it."

In the years which have passed since then, the Americans have continued to work it, and with the elasticity they have managed to import into it, have done much to bring it far nearer to the great ideals of its authors.

There were several large political public meetings in Oxford while I was an undergraduate, which I naturally attended, and one I specially remember, the chief speaker being Joseph Chamberlain : it was at the time when he was leading the Liberal Unionist opposition to Gladstone's Home Rule policy. It was the greatest speech from a political platform that I had ever heard up to then. I was greatly impressed by the forceful and lucid way in which he stated his case.

During the last year or so of my undergraduate time, I gained some experience of speaking on a political platform : a group of Conservative undergraduates, calling themselves, if I recollect rightly, the Oxford University Unionist Club, offered to address meetings in nearby constituencies : the chief mover of this was George Peel, a son of Speaker Peel, and we used to undertake all the speaking at these meetings, the arrangements for which were made by the local Conservative Associations with a local Chairman : they were for the most part small meetings in country villages, but they were a great success, and to me, at any rate, a most useful experience : they led to my often speaking afterwards at election meetings in my own home county and later on in Hertfordshire after I went to live at Watford.

Among my contemporaries at Oxford, whom I later knew as fellow-members of the House of Commons, were Lord Hugh Cecil, F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead), Griffith Boscawen, J. F. W.

Galbraith, Anthony Hawke, Betterton (now Lord Rushcliffe), Frank Fremantle, afterwards Sir Francis Fremantle, and E. N. (now Sir Ernest) Bennett, and my predecessor as Chairman, James Hope (now Lord Rankeillour). Lord Simon came up to Wadham the year I went down. Another good friend of mine at Wadham who never entered the House of Commons, but is now an active and influential member of the Upper House, was Lord Roche as he now is.

From the time I left Oxford in 1892 till I went to live at Watford in 1908 I did little or no active political work except when I went to help at elections in my old home in Huntingdonshire. But I was still as keenly interested as ever. When I left Oxford my secret ambition was to make sufficient money to enable me by the time I was forty to "retire into the House of Commons": but before I attained that age I had come to regard this as a vain ambition and far beyond my powers of achievement.

In 1908, though still practising in London, I went to live at Watford, then quite a small country market town: I had married some few years earlier with the result that I gave up spending week-ends in the country as I had usually done as a bachelor, and living entirely in London did not suit my health.

During a previous visit to Watford an exciting by-election at Peckham led to my discovery of the Watford Conservative Club to which I went for news: directly I went to live there, I joined this club and became a member of its Political Committee: I soon found a welcome opportunity of doing some political work locally.

Watford was then the chief place in the West Herts Division of Hertfordshire, which extended from the border of Middlesex at Bushey, out to beyond Tring, a distance of some 30 miles. The member for the Division was a Liberal, Mr. Nathaniel Micklem, K.C., who at the General Election of 1906 had defeated the Rt. Hon. T. F. Halsey (afterwards Sir Frederick Halsey, Bt.) who had represented the Division as a Conservative for many years. The Conservative Party in the Division were enthusiastic in their determination to win back the seat at the next opportunity, and had just selected a promising prospective candidate, Mr. Arnold Ward (still in the early thirties), the son of Mr. and Mrs. Humphry Ward.

As a matter of course I joined the West Herts Divisional Conservative Association, and undertook the secretaryship of a Branch of the Association, and in course of a comparatively short

time I became a member of the Executive Committee of the Divisional Association. Among my other local political work, I became Editor of the local page in a Conservative Party magazine which had a substantial circulation in the Division, and wrote most of its contents: that was a useful experience in more ways than one: I nearly involved the Association in an action for libel, but was fortunately able to settle the matter by agreeing to pay a small amount for costs: the Association, however, appreciated the work I was doing, and very kindly accepted responsibility and paid the costs. It taught me to be careful in such matters in future.

But the event which brought me into more prominence locally than anything else was a notable Liberal meeting in Watford under the Chairmanship of the late Dean Fry (then headmaster of Berkhamsted School), at which the chief speaker was Mr. Ure, K.C., the Lord Advocate for Scotland in the Liberal Government of the time: he had become notorious by reason of a statement he had made in a public speech about Old Age Pensions, for which he was severely castigated by Arthur Balfour, who had described the statement in his famous phrase as "a cold calculated and frigid lie." That Ure was to address a Watford meeting in support of the Liberal member, Micklem, who was also to speak, ensured not only a large audience of Watford Liberals but also the attendance of a number of angry Conservatives, and there was every prospect of a rowdy meeting. So it turned out to be.

I was generally reported to have been turned out. What in fact happened was that as I was trying to get to the back of the hall to try at the Chairman's request to restore some semblance of order, a number of Liberal stewards started a violent attack on me: some of my friends at once came to my assistance, and as a compact and increasing body we fought our way out, my friends proposing to hold an opposition meeting outside: but this the Police would not allow.

That meeting made me something of a local hero among the Conservatives of the Division, and I soon came to be one of their recognized leaders.

Then came the first 1910 General Election, in which I worked hard, and was speaking at meetings most nights. Arnold Ward won back the seat, beating Micklem by a substantial majority: the next General Election followed at the end of the same year and Ward retained the seat again after another hard fight in which I helped in every way I could: the Parliament then

elected was the Parliament which was continued till after the war of 1914-18. After this second 1910 Election I continued to take an active part in the work of the Conservative Party in the Division right up to the time of my being selected as prospective Candidate in 1918.

In July 1912 a casual vacancy occurred in the representation of one of the Watford Wards on the Herts County Council: it was at once known that a leading Watford Liberal, very unpopular with the Conservatives, would be nominated for the vacant seat: these elections to the County Council were often then to some extent run on party lines, and in this case that was inevitable as the Watford Conservatives would never allow this Liberal candidate to get in if they could prevent it, although the Divisional Conservative Association officially would not then take any part in Local Government elections.

I was approached by a number of voters in the Ward, mostly members of the West Watford Conservative Club, and consented to stand: my opponent was certainly a strong one—indeed so safe did he feel that being on a holiday in Scotland he did not think it necessary to return, but merely wrote a letter leaving his interests in the hands of his friends: they worked hard, but so did my friends and I, and I won by a substantial majority.

This made my opponent so angry that he determined to beat me when the County Council General Election should come along in the following March, and he very soon started working to that end: when the Polling Day came on the 8th of March, 1913, he felt confident of victory, and boasted that he had personally canvassed every one of the electors: it had been a keenly hard fought election, but I won by the narrow majority of ten votes, 743 to 733.

These two local elections and the two Parliamentary elections in which I had worked so closely and intimately with Arnold Ward, were certainly useful experience to me.

A year after this my good friend the late Mr. Lewis Evans, who was Chairman of the Divisional Conservative Association, became High Sheriff of the County and therefore had to resign, and keep out of party politics: I was elected Chairman in his place, and was thus Chairman when the War broke out in August 1914 until the end of Lewis Evan's term of office as High Sheriff. Though public party activity was suspended for the period of the War, the local Conservative organization was kept in being, and indeed did a good deal of quiet work: it was

active in the promotion of non-party functions and meetings in support of the War effort, and during the latter part of the War had to pay much attention to the new franchise (which among other things first gave women the vote) and the re-distribution under which Hertfordshire was given five seats instead of four. This alteration in the Hertfordshire constituencies was effected mainly by dividing the old West Hertfordshire Division into two, the Watford Division and the Hemel Hempstead Division. We were also much concerned with the proposal that Hertfordshire should be one of the counties in which proportional representation should be adopted experimentally: personally, I was one of those who opposed this proposal, and in the end we persuaded the County Council to do so.

Arnold Ward, who was in the Hertfordshire Yeomanry, was on active service during the War—mostly abroad—and he quite early in the War offered to resign from membership for the constituency, but the Association refused to accept this offer. Later on, a rather difficult position arose owing to a considerable number of Conservatives wishing that he should be asked to resign: this, however, was disposed of, but not before it had become evident that he had lost a good deal of support in and around Watford.

When, therefore, we had to consider the position created by the splitting of the constituency, and arrangements had been made for setting up separate party organizations for the two new divisions, there was a strong feeling in the new Watford Division Association that Ward should be recommended to choose to stand for the Hemel Hempstead Division rather than for the Watford Division.

Watford, therefore, started to think about a new prospective candidate: there was a strong feeling that it must be a local man: the most obvious and very suitable man was Lewis Evans: he very nearly was, and would have liked to have been, selected in 1910, but by this time he regarded himself as too old: the names of several others were mentioned and talked of privately among members of the Executive Committee, but none of them met with anything like unanimous approval.

Then it was that our Conservative agent who had been agent for many years, and was very highly thought of, came round to see me privately one evening. He said he believed I should be a far better candidate than any who had been thought of: he believed that many of the Executive Committee would think so,

but that they thought I could not afford either the time or the money : he wished, therefore, to know what I thought about it, and whether he might suggest my name to some members of the Executive. I told him that it would be very difficult for me : but I could just about provide for my election expenses, and that if I should be selected I would certainly do my best.

To cut short this part of my story, the suggestion of my being selected having been put to, and considered privately by some of the leading members of the Executive Committee, I was asked early in January 1918 to attend a special private meeting of the Executive Committee and to address them in regard to my possible selection as prospective candidate. I spoke for twenty minutes or more, was then asked to retire, and later was called back and informed that the Committee had unanimously passed a resolution to recommend me to the Council of the Association for adoption as prospective candidate. The members of the Committee all received me in a most cordial and kindly fashion and promised me wholehearted support.

On 16th of February, 1918, I was unanimously adopted by the Council of the Watford Division Conservative and Unionist Association as prospective candidate at the next General Election, whenever it should come.

Arnold Ward wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Association warmly supporting my selection. His father and mother, and his very active and able sister, Dorothy Ward, were also extremely kind and helpful to me, and my friendship with them will always remain one of my happiest memories.

The General Election came in December 1918, and then began my membership of the House of Commons which lasted for nearly a quarter of a century.

CHAPTER II

MY FIRST ELECTION TO, AND EARLY DAYS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE Parliament elected at the end of 1910, continued by reason of the War, was dissolved in November 1918, and followed immediately by a General Election. I was formally adopted as Coalition Candidate (supporting the Coalition Government under Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law) at a meeting in Watford on the afternoon of Wednesday, the 27th of November. I immediately commenced my campaign, holding my first public meeting that evening. My two opponents were Mr. George Lathan (Labour) and Mr. Frank Gray (opposition Liberal), both of whom in later years became members of the House—for other constituencies!

This General Election was a notable one, following quickly after the Armistice of November the 11th. It was the first time women (as yet only a restricted class of women) had the Parliamentary Vote, and was fought on a recent redistribution, and with a large number of sailor and soldier voters serving overseas, in respect of whom special arrangements were made enabling them to vote as absent voters. The polling was on Saturday, December the 14th, but the counting did not take place for a fortnight, in order to allow the votes of the absent voters to be brought home: the count therefore took place on Saturday, December the 28th, and the result was declared about 3 p.m. on that date; I was elected by a substantial majority, receiving some 3,000 more votes than both my opponents put together. I had been fairly confident of winning from the very beginning of the campaign: but my victory by such a big majority was naturally a great satisfaction to me: this result in the Watford Division was typical of what happened over nearly the whole country. I worked hard throughout the brief campaign and so did both my opponents, but though it might well be described as a hard-fought election, it was generally orderly and in no way particularly remarkable.

A feature of this General Election was the unusually large number of detailed "questionnaires" which every candidate received. Associations of every sort and kind sent out their "questionnaires" to all candidates, with circular letters, some

polite and others not so, requesting that they be returned with definite and detailed replies to all the questions. My "lawyer's caution" led me to get a number of gummed printed slips prepared, one of which I affixed to every such "questionnaire" to which I replied, the wording was to this effect:

These replies are intended to indicate the views I hold at the present time; but they are not to be regarded as in any way binding on me in the future, and they are not to interfere with my complete freedom to vote as I may think right at the time and under the then existing circumstances whenever such matters come up for consideration.

I found reason to be thankful that I had taken this course, and often found colleagues in the House who bitterly regretted the fact that they had given some written pledge or promise which they found it difficult or objectionable to have to comply with.

Except on great issues of first-class importance or on questions of broad principles a candidate or member should not, and should not be asked to, give any unqualified pledge or promise restricting his freedom of action. A member may often be faced with the problem of having to choose between voting for or against some motion in the way he would desire, and voting in such a way as to endanger, or weaken, the Government he was elected to support and desires to support. A member should always bear in mind that he is a "representative" and not a mere voting delegate.

I suppose nearly everyone who has been elected a member of Parliament for the first time feels proud of it? I certainly did! But I think that if one suffers from "swollen head" by reason of success in his election, he (in most, but not all cases) soon finds that being in the House is an excellent corrective!

I took the oath and subscribed the Roll on the first day possible, February the 5th. I had determined to sit in the Chamber almost throughout the sittings for some days, to get accustomed to the ordinary procedure: during the first few days I got a bad headache after an hour or two, which I believe was due to the peculiar (but not bad) system of ventilation (this, of course, refers to the old Chamber, since destroyed by enemy action): so badly did I suffer in this way, that I began to wonder seriously whether I might not be obliged to give up and retire; but one day, quite suddenly, these headaches ceased and gave me no more trouble. The system of ventilation was that the air, brought in from below the Chamber, after being purified and

warmed or cooled as required, then came up through a perforated floor, and passed out again through the roof ; the result was that there was a constant but almost imperceptible passage of air from floor to roof. I think this unusual atmosphere caused my headaches until I got accustomed to it.

I made my maiden speech on the second reading of the Acquisition of Land Bill on the 17th of April : I had devoted much thought to it and had made copious notes : but the speech I had so carefully prepared was never made ! When I rose to my feet I was so nervous that I could see nothing but a number of faces in a sea of mist : I had completely forgotten all I meant to say, and within a minute or two my notes were so crumpled and twisted up as to be unusable : but I remembered a few points which I had meant to deal with, and some of the speeches which had preceded mine, with the result that I made an entirely extempore speech without reference to my notes. I was not pleased with it, and do not think I had any reason to be. Reading it again now, after scores of maiden speeches I have had to listen to since, and trying to form an impartial view of it, I should say that it was not particularly bad, but that there was nothing in it to attract attention and that it was by no means worthy of note, and gave no indication that the speaker was likely ever to interest the House. The debate was wound up for the Government by the Attorney-General, Sir Gordon Hewart, afterwards Lord Hewart, who subsequently became one of my greatest friends : in his usual kindly way, he made a reference to my speech, with the customary complimentary remarks about my maiden effort, and after that I think no one remembered anything about it, and it sunk into the oblivion it deserved.

After my maiden effort I again for some time devoted myself to learning, rather than to taking an active part in, the business and work of the House. Industrial troubles, and demobilization matters, kept me busy in the constituency. In the House, I contented myself mostly with a few questions, usually resulting from affairs in the constituency.

Apart from my age (I was nearly 50 when I first entered the House) the claims of my business, on which I depended for my livelihood, made it out of the question for me to hope for office. But I was determined not to be a silent or inactive member : therefore some time after my not very successful maiden speech, I took to making brief interventions in debate when I got the chance and had something I thought worth saying. My speeches

were always extempore, partly because I seldom had much time for preparing a speech, and for that reason they were also always brief: but one incident which resulted from this gave me great encouragement. I was very anxious to speak in one debate in which many members wanted to take part; so I asked one of our Whips if he would give my name in to the Speaker (Lowther) and try to put in a word for me: soon after he came and told me that he had given in my name with others and had specially asked the Speaker to try and call me: The Speaker, he said, replied, "Oh yes, I will try and get him in: I never mind calling him for he is always very short and has something to say." I remembered that and tried to justify the reputation.

Like many others I have often sat through long debates, rising every time a member sat down, in the hope of being called, only to be disappointed; and also like many others, I sometimes thought that the best speeches were those which had never been delivered!

Towards the end of this Parliament, I was fortunate in that matters arose on which I had some special knowledge and experience, such as a Solicitors' Bill, a Lunacy Bill and the Law of Property Bill, and perhaps especially questions arising in Committee on the Finance Bills, income tax, and tax evasion, so that by the end of the Parliament in 1922, I had in a moderate way gained something of a reputation as an active back-bench member.

I was asked by the Chairman of the Selection Committee to become a member of the panel of Chairmen of private bill committees, but this I was to my great regret unable to accept, as it would have meant morning work which I could not do because of my business.

CHAPTER III

THE COALITION PARLIAMENT OF 1919-22

THE Coalition Parliament of 1919-22 was in many ways an unusual one: the Government had a very large majority: they were faced with two Oppositions, the Labour Party and the small remnant of Liberals opposed to the Coalition, soon known in the House as "the Wee Frees." The Leader of the Labour Party was William Adamson, member for West Fife, a Scottish coal-miner and for many years secretary of the Fife and Clackmannan Miners' Union: the Labour members, outnumbering the Opposition Liberals, were somewhat proudly claiming to be the official Opposition, apparently anticipating that the Liberal Opposition would resist the claim: Adamson was the first member called from the Opposition benches in the debate on the Address, and at the end of his speech he stated definitely, and somewhat aggressively, though quite politely, that his party's claim to fill the rôle of the principal Opposition, although it might be contested, was made seriously and would be persisted in.

Sir Donald Maclean, the Leader of the Wee Free Liberals, who spoke next, referred to this claim in a light and bantering way, concluded by saying that the question was one which would be settled by the Speaker and the House, and that he was content to leave it at that. In fact, no serious trouble ever arose on this matter: Adamson was for a time remarkably persistent in being the first to ask the usual formal questions about business and so on: Donald Maclean, one of the most punctiliously polite members in the House, behaved with dignified patience and usually contented himself with asking a supplementary question: the Government recognized both these parties as Oppositions with nearly—if not quite—equal rights, and even attempts on the part of the more light-hearted supporters of the Government to obtain amusement from trying to foment competition between two Opposition leaders met with little success.

The Government having such an immense majority, party discipline was very lax: the system of arranging "pairs" for divisions fell into abeyance: members, so far at least as Government supporters were concerned, felt under no obligation to attend the House when they did not want to: the main efforts of the Government Whips as to keeping members in the House

were confined to the dinner hour, and to the last-hour or so of a normal sitting ; and to late night sittings. Over and over again divisions resulted more from divergent views between supporters of the Government than from the usual differences between Government and Opposition : indeed, among some of the less serious of the Government supporters, it became almost a favourite sport to try to defeat the Government on some question of minor importance : the Government was defeated fairly often in this way, without really suffering much harm, and if necessary the House would make little or no trouble about somehow reversing such a result on the next day ! Lloyd George and Bonar Law were much occupied outside the House, the former especially was often engaged abroad at the Peace Conference and other conferences : other Ministers sometimes found it rather difficult to control their slightly unruly supporters. On occasions when the Government seemed to be in difficulty or in some danger of defeat, a cry would go up from the Treasury Bench " Send for Bonar " : there is no doubt that he had a great influence in the House : on many occasions when the Government's prospects looked bad, he would come in and, speaking in his quiet but lucid and forceful way, would completely change the general atmosphere and save the Government from a bad division. I do not think I have ever known any member whose speeches had such influence over the House of Commons as those of Bonar Law in the Coalition Parliament.

This was in no way due to their oratorical character, or to what people generally mean by persuasive power : Bonar Law was no orator and had no gifts of eloquence : his speeches were lucid statements of the intelligent reasoning of a man of high character who conscientiously believed in his case and was frank and open in stating it. We have all known great advocates who could make an equally powerful speech on either side in a controversy : he could never have done that.

As he did more than any other single man to preserve the Coalition, so when the time came he did more than anyone else to end it : it was his speech at the celebrated Carlton Club meeting in 1922 which finally settled the fate of the Coalition.

The influence of his character was exemplified by an incident at the time when it became clear that his health was breaking down : a group of Conservative back-bench members were discussing the question of the best man to succeed him in the leadership of the Party, and were going through the names of all

the prominent Conservative front-bench men: a name was mentioned of one (now dead), who had held many great offices with success and distinction, and was probably a man of greater ability than any of the others; his name was received with a unanimous "No" due entirely to the fact that he was regarded as too much swayed by considerations of personal ambition.

The majority of the new members were most conscientious and serious, and appreciated their responsibilities and the importance and dignity of the House: but many of them found the methods of procedure puzzling and gradually came to feel that Parliamentary life was not an occupation for which they were well fitted; many of them made up their minds not to stand again at the next election: some of those, however, came to learn by experience and changed their minds before the dissolution.

But in some ways it was not a good House from a Parliamentary point of view: with the majority of the members new and inexperienced, such a one-sided House was not a good training for them. There was a tendency to disregard traditions and precedents; the Prime Minister had not quite got rid of the position amounting almost to a dictatorship which he had held so much to the advantage of the country during the War or of his war-time methods of asking the House to adopt unusual courses of procedure.

Industrial unrest, widespread and serious, was one of the most prominent and difficult features of the time, and the King's Speech in 1919 was followed by a debate on the address in reply, which dealt largely with these conditions. An Amendment was moved by the Labour Opposition, regretting the omission from the Speech from the Throne of definite proposals for dealing with the causes of industrial unrest; it was pressed to a division and defeated by 311 to 59. After that, the House considered proposed new Rules of Procedure—a subject which we "new boys" did not know much about, so we listened to the discussion by the "old boys," and tried to learn something from doing so.

In the first session alone of this Coalition Parliament, no less than seventy-six Acts of Parliament were placed on the Statute Book, notwithstanding the claims on the time of the House of Commons of non-legislative business: the immense volume of work done would have been impossible had it not been for the fact that we had a Coalition Government with a large majority, faced by two Oppositions neither of which was strong, either numerically or otherwise. The return a little later of Mr. Asquith, after a

by-election at Paisley, was valuable to the Opposition Liberals and a distinct advantage to the House as a whole.

Apart from legislation arising from the post-war circumstances of the time, two old-standing chronic troubles of a highly controversial nature which had (as far as possible) been shelved at the outbreak of war, again demanded attention, and were the subjects of important Bills passed during this Parliament—Ireland and India.

An outstanding subject of interest in the early days of this Parliament was of course the Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles: following on that came the many other Conferences and minor Treaties: but the Government had many difficulties to deal with at home; strikes and industrial disputes sometimes involving serious riots were constantly occurring, and three serious strikes took place in the first two years, a police strike, a railway strike, and a coal-miners' strike, bringing about emergency measures and hasty special legislation to deal with possible resulting situations which threatened serious national dangers. No sooner did these matters seem to be improving than there broke out a serious campaign of violence and murders in Ireland. During the worst part of these Irish troubles, the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland was held by Colonel Hamar Greenwood, now Lord Greenwood. Whatever may be thought of the Government's Irish policy at this time, no one could fail to admire Hamar Greenwood's courage and bravery when his life was in constant danger: he was nobly supported all through this period by his devoted and plucky wife, who was always in the Ladies' Gallery when he had to deal with Irish affairs in the House. In the latter part of 1921 there was carried through the famous "Irish Treaty" which was approved in a special session of Parliament in December of that year summoned for that purpose and was ultimately embodied in the Irish Free State (Agreement) Act, 1922, passed into law in the following March.

The departure from the House of Commons of the Southern Irish Members after the Irish Treaty was noticeable in more ways than one: many of them had been extremely witty and often responsible for much good-humoured fun and laughter in the House. Among those who survived as members for some years were Joe Devlin and Jerry McVeagh, and also a well-known member of long standing, T. P. O'Connor, commonly known as "Tay Pay," who occupied rather a peculiar position: he had always been a member of the Irish Nationalist Party, but sat for

an English constituency, the Scotland Division of Liverpool, the electors of which were nearly all Irishmen and Home-rulers. A journalist by profession, he was a remarkable man, with a very humorous turn of mind. Incidentally, he has been described as "the last of the orators" in the House of Commons. Certainly he had a great gift of picturesque oratory, and it was said that he could bring tears to his eyes as easily as squeeze water from a wet sponge.

He was Chairman of the Standing Committee which dealt with the Matrimonial Causes Bill of 1923, referred to elsewhere, and in course of the proceedings I had been led into some argument with him on his "ruling out of order" an Amendment which I wished to propose. Shortly after this, I was talking to a former member of the House who had come into the Members' Lobby: this ex-member was also well-known to T.P., who came up behind me and, putting his hand across my shoulder, said to him, "I am surprised to find you consorting with such a disreputable fellow as this fellow Herbert, let me tell you how badly he behaved in Standing Committee the other day," and then proceeded to give his story of my alleged bad behaviour. I said to him, "Mr. O'Connor, I am afraid that age is telling upon you and your memory is failing and leads you wrong about facts."—"Oh no," said he, "I am a very old man, but thank God my memory is as good as ever."—"Then," I said, "it must be your sense of veracity which is failing you."—"Veracity," he replied. "Veracity! I never had any except for export purposes."

During a Debate in the House, when the atmosphere was rather tense and angry and there appeared to be every likelihood of an awkward scene, Tay Pay, by his humour, completely altered the atmosphere of the House and put everyone in a good temper. The Debate was in connection with an allegation against a member of making charges to the effect that many members were constantly drunk in the House. T.P. got up to speak, and after a few sentences in which he expressed the view that members generally behaved perfectly well in the House, he said, "There may be occasions on which a member, following the advice of St. Paul, has taken a little wine for his stomach's sake, and being unaccustomed to it, has perhaps taken a rather bigger dose than was advisable. But," he went on, "what is this House if not representative?"

The Government of India Bill of 1921 was a Bill intended to carry out the recommendations of the Montagu-Chelmsford

Report made by Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India, and Mr. Edwin Montagu who, as Secretary of State for India, brought in and was in charge of the Bill : it was designed to prepare the way for much more extensive legislation ultimately carried out by the Government of India Bill, 1935, which will be dealt with later on in this book.

On Monday, 30th June, 1919, Lloyd George, having arrived back from the Peace Conference, appeared again in the House of Commons, about a quarter to four. He received a remarkable ovation and was greeted with loud and enthusiastic cheers, all the members rising in their places to cheer him, with the exception of some half-dozen of the Opposition. As soon as the cheers, in which strangers in the Gallery had joined, were dying down, someone having given the lead, the House broke into " God Save the King," and the whole of the members joined in this, with the exception of only one or perhaps two who remained seated, and there were shouts of " Stand up, Bolshevik," and a little later some attempt was made to raise a question with the Speaker in regard to a member having thus been guilty of disrespect to His Majesty ; but the Speaker disposed of this by disregarding the question and calling the Prime Minister, who at once rose to make a short statement, in which he promised to make a fuller statement on the following Thursday, July 3rd.

On Thursday, July 3rd, the Prime Minister was again loudly cheered when he entered the House about 4.15 p.m., and soon afterwards rose to make his promised somewhat lengthy statement in regard to the Peace terms ; he asked leave to introduce two necessary Bills, one to ratify the Peace Treaty and the second to ratify the Anglo-French Treaty. At the conclusion of his long speech, leave was given to introduce the two Bills, and he went to the Bar and brought them up to the Table in the usual way, again amid scenes of considerable enthusiasm.

A few minutes later, a woman in the Gallery stood up and shouted a protest against something. She was, of course, at once ejected ; but then a group of strangers in the Gallery again started an uproar, and the Speaker ordered the Galleries to be cleared ; this was quickly done, and then the business of the House proceeded without further interruption. The Gallery was, of course, kept empty for the rest of that day's sitting.

On the following Sunday, July 6th, the great Thanksgiving Service was held at St. Paul's Cathedral, with a further service in the open air, conducted from the steps of the Cathedral. The

King and Queen, and other members of the Royal Family, attended, as did the members of the Government and many members of both Houses and their wives.

On Friday, July 4th, the Government suffered their first major defeat in the House of Commons, when a Women's Emancipation Bill, a private member's bill introduced by members of the Labour Party, passed its third reading on a division in a thinly attended House by 100 to 85. This defeat was a result of the small attendance of Government supporters in the House on a Friday, which was given up to Private Members' Bills. Naturally the defeat of the Government was received with loud cheers by the Labour members in the House, and cries of "Resign," which had little or no effect on Bonar Law, who was present as the Leader of the House. Although it was a rather unfortunate incident for the Government, no one attached any great importance to it as it was realized that the Bill would not pass the House of Lords.

In 1921 arrangements were made to hold a dinner in the House of members who were Oxford men. We got Asquith to take the Chair, but with the sole exception of him, we were all Government supporters: I think we numbered about 100. On the night of the dinner, the Safeguarding of Industries Bill was being taken in Committee, or on Report, and some of the Opposition, in spite of Asquith being in the Chair, decided to play an unpleasant trick upon us: there was a long schedule to the Bill of articles to be "safeguarded" and they determined to divide on each item, without any debate, which would have meant our having to spend all the time marching through the division lobbies: after two divisions, we discovered the plot, and appealed to Banbury and Austin Hopkinson to help us: the next item in the schedule was "theodolites and other mathematical instruments," and these two gallant friends saved us by talking about such instruments till 10 p.m.!

Among great men now dead who sat in the House of Commons in this Coalition Parliament were Arthur James Balfour, Sir Edward Carson, and Sir Gordon Hewart, all of whom went to the House of Lords in 1922. Balfour, I came to know better than I probably should have done otherwise through my secretaryship of the Unionist Club. Carson, that great advocate and stalwart Ulsterman, was a constant attendant in the House and was well known to many of us in the Conservative Party. In spite of the many bitterly fought political struggles in which he took such a prominent part, it was never his fault if he was not on friendly

terms personally with political opponents. I think his interruption of Joe Devlin, when he said to him "that is the worst of you, you can't hate," was true of himself also. Hewart left the House of Commons in 1922 to become Lord Chief Justice: my friendship with him continued for the rest of his life, for we often came in contact in several different ways. I think he was one of the best "House of Commons men" I ever knew: I often told him that he never ought to have left the House for the Bench and I believe he fairly soon came to think so himself: he often told me in later years how he regretted that he was not in the House of Commons. He thoroughly understood the House, was a good speaker, and as a Minister was one of the best I ever knew in handling a difficult situation in the House: had he stayed there he might well have risen to very high positions.

Another man whom I came to know and like very much was General Sir Archibald Hunter, a great soldier, who was only in the House of Commons from 1918 to 1922. He was an old and intimate friend of Carson: it may be remembered that Carson had married a second time in 1914, and a son was born of this second marriage in 1921, Carson's love for and devotion to this baby was well known; just after the baby was born, Carson's life was rightly regarded as in great danger from Sinn Féin. One day Hunter told me that on the previous Sunday Carson had been lunching with him: on arriving Carson apologized for having had to bring *two* detectives with him as well as his chauffeur. Hunter said to him, "That reminds me, I meant to ask you, is that baby of yours being guarded? these fellows would love to kidnap him." Carson turned as white as a sheet and asked to use the telephone: he rang up Scotland Yard and after that, as long as the danger continued, the baby never left the house without an armed detective in attendance.

St. Stephen's Club at the corner of Bridge Street and the Embankment, confined to men holding Conservative or Unionist views, was most useful to Conservative M.P.s: it had a passage under Bridge Street to the House of Commons and was connected with the Division-bell system: it admitted Conservative members of Parliament as "sessional members" at a very reduced subscription, and a large proportion of the Conservative M.P.s were either sessional or ordinary members of the club and made considerable use of it: it had a card-room on the basement floor close to the underground passage to the House, which was very popular, as there is no card-room in the House. It had a con-

siderable number of bedrooms, much patronized by members, and I myself occupied a bedroom there most nights of the week when the House was sitting, for some years.

St. Stephen's Club was the home of "the Unionist Club" which held its club dinners there, members of that club being made honorary members of St. Stephen's Club on those nights, if they were not ordinary (or sessional) members.

The Unionist Club was founded in the days of the Home Rule struggles, largely by the efforts of Joseph Chamberlain, and was composed of Unionist M.P.s and others interested in the Unionist Cause. Many Unionist M.P.s had always belonged to, and formed the majority of members of the club, the Unionist Prime Minister, or potential Prime Minister, always being President.

The club held weekly dinners with a guest of the evening who was the principal speaker, usually a Minister who was in charge of a pending Bill, or of a subject of special interest at the time: his speech was followed by a general and rather informal discussion. These meetings were of use to the Minister as bringing him into closer touch with many of his supporters, and enabling him to put his views before them and listen to their comments: Ministers were therefore usually only too glad to come, and the members of the club were glad of the opportunities of a comparatively private discussion with the Minister. Both the Minister and members of the club benefited by becoming better acquainted with each other.

Membership of the Unionist Club was not entirely confined to members or ex-members of Parliament, but others who were members of the club were for the most part people of some distinction in literature, law, science, finance, or something of the kind, and their membership added considerably to the interest and success of the club.

Very soon after the General Election of 1918, I became secretary of the club, owing mainly to my old friend Pike Pease, afterwards Lord Daryngton, who had been secretary in the previous Parliament: he now became chairman of the club.

As secretary, my chief duty was that of arranging the weekly dinners and inviting the principal guest of the evening, and so on. This was very agreeable and useful to me, and brought me in contact with some of the older and more distinguished members of the Conservative Party.

On the 1st August, 1922, an unusual proceeding took place when Horatio Bottomley, having been convicted of felony at the

Old Bailey and sentenced to a term of penal servitude, was expelled from the House. Notice had been given that a motion to this effect would be moved on that day ; the proper notice and invitation to attend in his place in the House on that day had been given to Bottomley. He was, of course, in prison at the time. There was much interest among members about this, as there was a widespread expectation that he would be in his place in the House, as he had a right to be, and there was a good deal of talk about how it would be arranged. It seems that if he had desired to attend he would have been brought by a warder or warders from the prison to the precincts of the House, where he would have been temporarily handed over by them into the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms ; but when the time came for the motion to be moved, the Speaker announced that he had received a letter from Bottomley, which he proceeded to read to the House ; in it Bottomley stated that he had hoped and wished to be in his place, but that he was in hospital and that his medical advisers had advised him not to do so. His letter was a lengthy one and expressed his love of the House of Commons and his pride in having been a member of the House, and his feeling that his expulsion would be the heaviest part of the penalties that he had to suffer. It was, of course, a remarkably skilfully worded letter : it was listened to in dead silence, and as soon as the Speaker had finished reading it, Austen Chamberlain requested that the letter which had been written to the Speaker by the Judge who tried the case should be read to the House ; this having been done, Chamberlain moved the motion that Bottomley be expelled from the House, with very few words, and refraining from discussing the contents of Bottomley's letter. The motion was carried without opposition and that was the end of this incident, and the House passed to its ordinary daily business.

Bottomley was, of course, a man of very exceptional ability, and it had often been said that if he had been straight he might well have become Archbishop of Canterbury, if he had chosen to go into the Church, or Lord Chancellor if he had gone to the Bar. Certainly, whatever profession or occupation he might have taken up he would very soon have risen to the top. He had been in the House of Commons for a good many years and had been a fairly active member ; but for some years before his expulsion he had, on account of his general record, ceased to carry any weight in the House, and for some time little or no notice was ever taken of his speeches.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESIGNATION OF MR. SPEAKER LOWTHER AND THE ELECTION OF MR. SPEAKER WHITLEY

MR. JAMES LOWTHER, afterwards Lord Ullswater, who became Speaker in 1905, would have resigned office at the end of the 1914-18 War if he had merely consulted his own wishes ; but he agreed to remain in office, at the urgent request of the Prime Minister supported by many others, when the first post-war Parliament was elected until the new Parliament should have got through its first year or so. Early in 1921 it became generally known that his resignation was imminent, and there was much talk and speculation as to who would succeed him. An obvious candidate was Mr. J. H. Whitley, who had been Chairman of Committees and Chairman of Ways and Means and Deputy Speaker since 1911. Whitley, however, was anything but acceptable to a large number of Conservatives whose party was numerically far the largest in the House—and the talk about who would be the next Speaker was largely due to a widespread belief that Whitley would not receive general support : a substantial number of the older Conservative members were bitterly opposed to him, some of them having never forgiven an incident in 1913 when it was alleged that a Liberal Government was saved from a serious defeat by an undue prolongation of the debate when Whitley was in the Chair. He was considered to have favoured his party by helping to delay taking the Division and so not showing the strict impartiality expected of the Chair. In the eight years which had elapsed since then, Whitley had, I believe, never been regarded as otherwise than strictly and properly impartial, and this old incident carried little or no weight except with those old members who had been so angry with him at the time. What counted most against him was that he was a Liberal, and had been, as such, a somewhat prominent party man in the days before he became Chairman. The Liberals, particularly the type of Liberal such as he was thought to be, were not at the time at all popular with the rank and file Conservative members, who considered that they were entitled at this time to have a Conservative Speaker, and that there were many in the party well qualified for the office. Moreover, among the new Conservative members there were many who had already become

somewhat imbued with ideas of the importance of preserving the rights and privileges of private members in such matters as the election of a Speaker, and they were much opposed to anything which might tend to establish a precedent for the Chairman of Ways and Means being regarded as having a claim to succeed to the Speaker's Chair. These Conservatives opposed to Whitley had in mind many members of their party whom they regarded as fit men to hold office as Speaker. Among those mentioned as possible suitable candidates were Sir Ernest Pollock, Pike Pease, Tom Inskip, Stanley Baldwin and Sir Frederick Banbury ; any of whom would no doubt have made a good Speaker. All of them had distinguished careers and ultimately became members of the House of Lords.

Sir⁹ Ernest Pollock would have much liked to be Speaker : but he was at that time Solicitor-General : when he spoke to the Prime Minister about it, he was told that he could not be regarded as a possible candidate while he was a member of the Government, and that if he wished to be proposed he must first resign office as Solicitor-General : that he was unwilling to do unless his election as Speaker was certain, and so he decided to retain office as Solicitor-General and not to be a candidate for the Speakership. Pike Pease being Assistant Postmaster-General was in a similar position.

Such was the position at the end of March : and a few days later a remarkable incident occurred : Lowther's impending resignation was known to the Government but had not been officially announced. Lloyd George had just decided on a substantial reconstruction of his Government ; on Saturday the 2nd of April there appeared in the Press the official list of the new appointments to a number of important Government offices. It must be remembered that the Chairman is not a member of, or appointed by, the Government but that he is an officer of the House, and, like the Speaker, is elected by the House, although customarily proposed by the Prime Minister : he is elected for the duration of Parliament and remains in office during that time regardless of any changes in the Government, unless he dies or retires previously. Whitley had been elected Chairman at the beginning of the Parliament and was still Chairman and had not resigned. But the official list of new Government appointments included " Mr. James F. Hope, M.P., to be Chairman of Committees." How this came about will be explained later. But an announcement of the appointment of Chairman by the Govern-

ment, and when that office was still held by Whitley, created something of a storm among old members of the House : not only did they quite rightly and properly regard it as a breach of established custom and a gross infringement of the rights of private members, but it appeared to indicate an intention on the part of the Government to carry the election of Whitley as Speaker and thus cause a vacancy in the office of Chairman. These points were raised in a long letter from Sir William Bull, which appeared in *The Times* of April the 12th and one from myself in *The Times* of April the 13th, stressing this particular point of the custom regarding election to the Speakership and indicating that it made it impossible for some of us to support the election of Whitley, when his election had thus been assumed as a certainty by the Government who had purported to appoint a successor to him as Chairman. My letter to *The Times*, copies of which were widely circulated by Sir William Bull, led to my being regarded as one of the prominent opponents of Whitley and was followed by further letters including one in reply signed "An old Parliamentary Hand," which was in fact written by Lowther, as I was told with his permission, by Whitley himself on the day it appeared in *The Times*. A few days later Lord Edmund Talbot, the Chief Whip, asked me to go and see him and endeavoured to persuade me to give up my opposition to Whitley's election, which, however, I did not see my way to do. He explained to me how the unfortunate mistake in the list of Government appointments had occurred: Lloyd George had settled the new Government appointments on the Friday (April the 1st) and at the end of a meeting with some of his colleagues had said, "I suppose Whitley will become Speaker and we shall have to propose a new Chairman, do we agree on 'James Hope'?" and that being agreed he put a note on his list, "Chairman, James Hope."

He did not intend the new appointments to be published until some time in the following week, so he put his list, the only one in existence, in a drawer in his desk at Downing Street and locked it up and went off to Chequers for the week-end: but that evening he telephoned to his secretary at Downing Street that he had changed his mind and wanted the new appointments communicated to the Press at once for publication next day, that the list was in a certain drawer which the Secretary had access to and would he act accordingly. The Secretary, therefore, simply had the rough list copied and sent to the Press with Hope's name on it,

which should not have been done. This was quite a reasonable explanation that the Government had not intentionally done anything unconstitutional provided (which was however warmly disputed by Sir William Bull and many of his friends) that they had, after full enquiry, satisfied themselves that Whitley would be generally acceptable to the House. It was right that the Government as responsible for the due carrying on of the business of the House, and as the best able to do so, should—through their Whips and otherwise—take steps to find out who was the member who would be most acceptable to the House. As regards the Chairman, if that office became vacant, it was the admitted custom that the Prime Minister should propose the name of a member for election by the House. But, however unintentional it may have been, the fact remained that an official intimation by the Government of new appointments had included an appointment by them of a Chairman, on an assumption that the then Chairman would become Speaker.

Lowther's resignation was to have been announced by him in the House on Monday the 18th of April, but in consequence of difficulties caused by a coal strike and a threatened railway strike, it was deferred for a week. Meanwhile, great efforts were made to obtain support for Whitley, and those opposing his election found difficulty in getting a suitable candidate willing to oppose him. Pressure was brought to bear on Sir Frederick Banbury to stand, but he was not very willing to do so, owing to his age: he was then seventy. He ultimately agreed to allow himself to be proposed provided he could get definite pledges from at least 100 members to support him: this was difficult to do in the time available, in face of the great efforts which had been made to get promises of support for Whitley: consequently a meeting of members opposed to the election of Whitley was held on Tuesday, April the 26th, the day before the election, at which it was decided not to put forward another candidate or to divide on the motion, but that a protest should be made by three members, Ronald McNeill, Joynson-Hicks, and myself. Ronald McNeill made a good and forcible speech, Joynson-Hicks, less so—and my effort was completely ineffective: by the time my turn to speak came, the House, which had shown signs of restiveness during Joynson-Hicks' speech, became impatient and there was a buzz of subdued conversation which made it almost impossible for me to be heard: it was, to my mind, the most killing method possible of dealing with an unpopular speech, and—there being no one in the Chair to

keep order—it was completely successful. I think it is the most trying experience I ever had in the House, except (for very different reasons) when I announced my own resignation of the Chairmanship, twenty-two years later.

Austen Chamberlain replied on behalf of the Government to the protests which had been made: he said that the Government fully admitted the claims which had been made on behalf of the private members of the House: the opponents of Whitley's election regarded this as satisfactory, but they were not much impressed by his attempt to defend the Government against the complaints which had been made of their actions.

The motion for the election of Whitley, which had been moved by Colonel Mildmay (Conservative) and seconded by Arthur Henderson (Labour), was then carried without a Division.

Personally, Whitley and I were very good friends: he had been kind to me as a new member: he usually dined at a small table in the members' dining-room by himself, but frequently asked me to dine with him: I had therefore got to know him well, and our personal friendship remained unaffected by my actions at this time: he fully understood that my opposition to him was on constitutional and not personal grounds, and we, in fact, discussed the matter frequently while it was going on. During his Speakership I not infrequently raised points of order on which he differed from views expressed by me, but he never failed to treat me with politeness and consideration on those occasions. That he felt no resentment at my conduct regarding his election was evidenced by the fact that soon after his election as Speaker, he placed me on the panel of temporary Chairmen.

Lowther was undoubtedly a great Speaker, and he had established a reputation as such long before I got into the House. He was Speaker for, in all, sixteen years, and I was only in the House during the last two or two and a half years of his Speakership, but in that time I certainly saw enough of him to feel that his reputation was justified. The chief criticism of him which I heard was that he was too autocratic, and inclined to call to speak members who would amuse or interest him rather than those whom he regarded as bores; but these at any rate were faults on the right side. A Speaker, to be a success, must be to some extent autocratic, and if he erred a little as suggested in his methods of selecting members to speak, his error was one which the House might well sympathize with.

In the Chair he was a dignified Speaker, with a power of

controlling the House satisfactorily. He had a great knowledge of the procedure of the House and its traditions in debate, and (a matter of some importance) of the reasons for and inner meanings of the established rules and customs and traditions of the House. In his earlier days as Speaker, when the Irish Nationalist members were avowedly doing all they could to obstruct the business of the House, he had a difficult time, and appears to have got through it with considerable success: he was mainly responsible for the alteration in Standing Orders, which made it possible to suspend two or more members at the same time, when such members had been jointly concerned in disorderly conduct; prior to that alteration if, as not infrequently happened, it was necessary to suspend several members, a separate Motion of Suspension was required for each member, which, of course, played into the hands of obstructionists by wasting time.

During the War of 1914-18 he presided over what came to be known as the Speaker's Conference, which made the recommendations, subsequently carried out by Acts of Parliament, for the re-distribution of seats and that revision of the franchise which, for the first time, gave the vote to women.

He certainly had that sense of humour which is so valuable in a Speaker: on one occasion in 1919, a Conservative member for one of the Dublin Divisions, Sir Maurice Dockrell, a typical old Irish Baronet, had a question on the order paper about some recruiting posters, issued by the Government during the War, with pictures of soldiers and naval men in uniform, and the words "Come and Join Us"; there was an allegation in his question that these posters had been posted up in considerable numbers on the outside walls of the principal lunatic asylum in or near to Dublin. He followed up his question with several supplementary questions until the Speaker found it necessary to stop them and go on to the next question; but when questions were over Dockrell returned to the charge and appealed to the Speaker to allow him to address certain further questions to the Minister; the Speaker refused, and Dockrell, getting somewhat excited, lapsed into his broadest Irish brogue and exclaimed, "But Mishter Shpaker dear, the throuble is ye did not allow me rope enough."—"Exactly," replied the Speaker promptly, "the House would greatly miss the Honourable Member": the whole House roared with laughter, including Dockrell himself, and that put an end to the incident.

Whitley had a difficult man to follow, and although he may

not have been a bad Speaker, he will not rank as a great Speaker. Certainly no one could justly accuse him of being too autocratic : he at times appeared afraid of the House, and one felt that he would have made a better Speaker had he had some experience as a referee of football matches. Anything like a scene or a row in the House was repugnant and trying to him : on one occasion, during an all-night sitting when the House was in Committee and he had retired to bed, there was such disorder in the House that the Chairman had to send for the Speaker and he had to be woken up and to dress hurriedly and come into the House : he then had to suspend two or three members amid scenes of considerable excitement and disorder. It was clearly an unpleasant experience to him.

During his Speakership, the Labour Party were for the first time the official Opposition ; many of them were new members, inexperienced in Parliamentary procedure, and had little or no respect for rules and customs which were not congenial to them. Whitley, on more than one occasion, expressed the opinion privately that, under these circumstances, it was necessary, as he put it, " to drive them with a loose rein " : he considered that if the Chair adopted such autocratic measures as Lowther would probably have done, it might have resulted in serious troubles and disputes with the Chair, which would have done immense harm to the House, and might have resulted in something like a breakdown of Parliamentary procedure. Though there was no doubt much to be said for this view, he carried it rather far, with the result that during his Speakership the House tended to get rather out of hand ; moreover, experienced members of the House belonging to other Parties felt that he sometimes gave far more licence and liberty to members of the Labour Party than to other members. He had been for many years Chairman of Committees, and he had a considerable knowledge of the rules and customs of the House ; but somehow, perhaps through lack of real understanding of the reasons for, and the theory of, those rules and customs, he was often unfortunate in his rulings. No Speaker or Chairman is bound by the rules of his predecessors if he differs from them, and I am afraid that during the years following immediately after his Speakership many of his rulings were departed from or over-ruled by his successors.

Whitley had an intense love of the House of Commons and a keen interest in its history. This led to work by him which will form a lasting memorial of his Speakership.

Having become Speaker soon after the conclusion of the War of 1914-18, he revived pre-war customs connected with the Speakership, which had of necessity fallen into abeyance during the War. He gave again the customary Speaker's Dinners, which it had been usual for the Speaker to give each session : there were usually three of these.

He revived also the Speaker's Levées, of which there were usually two held in every Session ; one only would have been unduly overcrowded, and moreover two gave every member a better opportunity of attending. Attendance at these Levées, though not technically compulsory, is regarded as a duty on the part of every member.

But there were two other matters for which Whitley deserves to be specially remembered. One was his action in getting a number of young and capable artists to paint a series of pictures of important landmarks in British history, for the panels on the wall of St. Stephen's Hall : in this he was ably advised and assisted by the late Sir William Rothenstein. These pictures replaced the two very large pictures of " The Meeting of the Duke of Wellington and Blücher on the Field of Waterloo " and " The Death of Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar," which were removed to and now hang in the Royal Gallery.

The other matter was what one may call the " reinstatement " of the Crypt Chapel for its proper purposes. This chapel and its use are described elsewhere, but prior to Whitley's time, although it had been fully repaired and restored, comparatively little use was made of it, and it was regarded by ecclesiastical authorities as having ceased to be a consecrated building, because of the ignoble uses to which it had been put prior to its restoration.

Whitley himself was a very religious man, but was not a member of the Church of England, his family having been for many generations Non-Conformists ; but he was a broad-minded man, and, like many Free-Churchmen, had an intense respect for the Established Church and a keen sense of its value to the country : as Speaker he regularly attended the ordinary Sunday morning services at the House of Commons Parish Church of St. Margaret's. For some reason not easy to understand, Whitley's efforts regarding the chapel were not approved by the then Rector of St. Margaret's Church, to which the chapel was regarded as in some way attached ; but they were enthusiastically assisted by others, including in particular the Lord Great Chamberlain, Lord Lincolnshire, who officially has control of the whole of

the Palace of Westminster. With this help, Whitley succeeded in his object ; he had the chapel re-consecrated, and ever since, its use for various ceremonies has been fully recognized : I think all trace of objection has long disappeared, and it is now a recognized building for christenings and marriages, and has its own registers. A Lord Chancellor (Lord Loreburn) was married in the chapel not long after its re-consecration.

CHAPTER V

THE LAW OF PROPERTY BILL, 1922 (THE^e BIRKENHEAD ACT)

THE Law of Property Bill, 1922, had a long history behind it. Drastic reform of the law relating to real property had for generations occupied the minds of our great lawyers : but I begin my story with a day in 1893 when a Wadham undergraduate spent a quiet summer day out of doors reading a well-known text-book, *Williams' Law of Real Property*, and coming back to his rooms in the evening, determined to carry out this great reform : he intended to do away with the Statute of Uses, which, used in a way never intended by its authors, had become the foundation of the complicated law relating to land in England. That was a big task for anyone to set himself : but this young undergraduate was F. E. Smith : he had already told his friends that he intended to be Lord Chancellor, and they who knew him and his abilities, saw no reason to laugh at this. Called to the Bar, elected a member of Parliament in 1906, he became Solicitor-General, then Attorney-General in 1915 at the age of forty-three ; he became Lord Chancellor in 1919, and in 1922 he succeeded in carrying into law the Act known after him as the Birkenhead Act, which carried out his intention, and brought about a radical reform and simplification of the Law of Real Property.

Such an Act of Parliament could not be the work of one man : most of the great real property lawyers of the time had a hand in it : but it needed one man to take in hand the main direction of the efforts of many ; without the driving force and great ability of Lord Birkenhead, as F. E. Smith became, the Bill could never have become law : it was justifiably called the Birkenhead Act.

F. E.'s earliest efforts in the matter set others seriously to work, and brought about discussions, conferences and committees and ultimately the drafting of a Bill : even the drafting of the Bill was of necessity the work of many, but the ultimate chief draftsman was Benjamin Lennard Cherry, afterwards Sir Benjamin Cherry, who had learnt his conveyancing and draftsmanship from E. P. Wolstenholme, probably the greatest conveyancer and the most competent legal draftsman of recent times. Soon after becoming Lord Chancellor, Birkenhead was ready with a draft Bill, which he introduced in the House of Lords in the Session of 1920 : this

First Bill as then introduced could not be much more than a draft for consideration and discussion, but it was evidence of Birkenhead's determination to carry out his great project.

After being given a second reading, it was referred to a joint Committee of both Houses, who devoted much time and work to it, and amended it very substantially: even after that, it was criticized very much by some of the eminent lawyers in the House of Lords, and Birkenhead very wisely agreed not to proceed further with it in that Session, so that time might be given for consideration of all the criticisms which had been made. Again in the Session of 1921 he introduced in the Lords the Second Bill: in this, the amendments which had been made were incorporated, and it was again given an immense amount of most careful consideration, not only by lawyers and land-owners in the House of Lords, but by legal luminaries and the many persons and bodies of persons interested in the subject, whether as lawyers, as land-owners, dealers in land, or people otherwise concerned in the proposed changes in the law relating to land, and interests in land. By the end of the Session of 1921, this second Bill had been further extensively amended and altered as a result of the criticisms, representations and suggestions which had been forthcoming from all these quarters. Birkenhead himself had seen to it that the fullest consideration should be given to the views of all these interested parties: his readiness to do this and his realization of the value of criticisms, went far to disarm those (and they were neither few nor unimportant) who declared themselves opponents of the Bill; and they mostly became like the majority of the lawyer critics, sympathetic to the Bill generally and therefore helpful in making it a practicable and useful measure. It ultimately passed through all stages in the House of Lords, but reached the Commons too late for them to deal with it in that Session. So the Third Bill, introduced again by Birkenhead in the Lords in the Session of 1922, was a substantial improvement on the first two Bills, and was supported by many who, like myself, had felt unable to support the original Bill.

By this time Birkenhead had been able at last to obtain at least the benevolent good-will of the Government, which had hitherto felt considerable hesitation about supporting the Bill; and he was able to persuade the Cabinet to include the Bill in their legislative programme: the King's Speech at the opening of the Session contained this paragraph: "Proposals which were submitted to you last year will again be laid before you for the

amendment of the law relating to real property and to the methods of land transfer."

When therefore this Bill of 1922 was introduced in the House of Lords in the form in which they had passed it in 1921, Birkenhead had no trouble in persuading that House to look upon it as an agreed measure and to pass it very quickly through all stages in order that it might reach the Commons in good time: he anticipated the probability that the Commons might spend a good deal of time on it, and might make a number of amendments, and he was therefore anxious that it should reach the Commons fairly early in the Session.

The second reading of the Bill was moved in the House of Commons on the 15th of May, by the Solicitor-General, Sir Leslie Scott, now Lord Justice Scott. It would not have been an easy task for anyone: but it was a specially difficult one for Leslie Scott, who was a Common Law man and therefore had previously had comparatively little knowledge of, or experience in, conveyancing work or real property law: but he devoted his great ability to mastering the intricacies of the Bill, and thus carried out his task admirably, both in the debate on second reading and in the subsequent stages of the Bill. He had already for a long while been intimately associated with the measure and had been Chairman of a Committee some years previously which dealt fully with many of the proposals in this Bill, and recommended a Bill on the lines of this one. The Bill of which he now moved the second reading consisted of over 300 pages: the Act as ultimately passed, occupied no less than 310 pages of the bound volume of Statutes. It was said, and I believe rightly, to be the longest Bill ever introduced into the House (with the possible exception of certain Private Consolidation Bills): it was no wonder therefore that most members who were not lawyers felt and took but little interest in it! Indeed there were but few members present in the House for the second reading, who were not lawyers: other members regarded it as an opportunity for a holiday—or as they probably said, for getting on with some of their work. It was like a day devoted to Scottish Estimates, when trustful English and Welsh members, with perhaps doubtful wisdom, are accustomed to leave things to the Scots and the Treasury: now lay members could leave things to the lawyers. But they were puzzled: here, they were told, was a Bill to simplify the law, promoted by lawyers! Did not lawyers live on the complications of the law? Were they not, like the doctor, a specialist on children's ailments,

who when asked by a fond mother whether he objected to children's parties, replied, " Object, why I live by them." If I may be permitted (being myself a solicitor) to say a word for the lawyers, I should like to say that the greater part of both branches of the legal profession are all in favour of simplification of the Law : they do not fear being unwanted, or unemployed, on this account as (especially in view of the great advances and developments of recent times) they know that improvements in the Law will, as has been the case in the past, lead to even more calls on their services.

The debate on the second reading of this Bill in the House of Commons occupied only about five and a half hours—much less than a whole Parliamentary day, and of the seventeen members who took part in it, all were lawyers but three : one of those three was Mr. Ernest Pretzman, who as the spokesman of the Land Union and representing the landowners, had long been interested in the Bill and had been advised in regard to it by some of the best legal advisers that could be found : the other two non-lawyer members were Colonel Wedgwood and Mr. L'Estrange Malone. These two non-lawyer members seemed to be hostile to the Bill, but to find it difficult to give any clear reason for opposition : neither of them appeared to be very fond of lawyers ; both seemed to have a distrust of lawyers which they might have expressed (though they did not) by the old Latin quotation "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*"

A motion for rejection of the Bill had been placed on the Order paper by Sir Thomas Bramsdon, an eminent solicitor, who had for many years taken a very keen and active interest in the matter and had made many useful criticisms and suggestions : he made an excellent speech in which he criticized parts of the Bill, but showed no hostility to its main principles ; and at the end of his speech he explained that he had put his motion on the paper mainly with a view to being able to speak fairly early in the debate, that he did not intend to move it, as he was in no way hostile to the Bill, but hoped to improve it. In fact, not one of the speakers opposed the Bill, which was read a second time without a division.

The Bill was then referred in the usual way to a Standing Committee.

I had spoken in the second reading debate, and was known to the Government (and others) to be very interested in the Bill and therefore I accepted the invitation which came to me in due

course to serve on the Committee. I had carefully studied the Bill : I had had it interleaved and bound up in two volumes and had in mind a large number of amendments which I thought desirable. I had one great advantage, which indeed had much to do with the interest I had taken in the Bill : Benjamin Cherry (whom I have already referred to as the chief draftsman of the Bill) had for many years been one of my most intimate friends : in our younger days soon after I left Oxford (he left Cambridge at the same time) we had lived in lodgings together, and we had worked much together even since. So I supplied him with a complete copy of all my proposed amendments and we discussed them together : on his advice, or by his persuasion, I abandoned some of them, and as to the remainder I got him to re-settle them, so as to get them into such a form that if the Government were prepared to accept them in principle, no question would arise of any necessity for re-drafting them. In the result I put down a considerable number of amendments for the Committee stage.

When the Committee met, it soon became obvious that members with little or no knowledge of the subject were not going to take up the time of the Committee by talking about a subject they did not understand, indeed one of the chief troubles which arose was to obtain the attendance of the necessary quorum. Most of the members really interested had adopted a course somewhat similar to that taken by me ; they had discussed their amendments beforehand with some of those intimately concerned with the Bill.

The Solicitor-General was courteous and considerate but firm in his refusal to agree to amendments of which he did not approve, stating briefly but clearly the reasons for his disapproval. The result was that the Committee instead of being occupied for weeks as had been expected, completed its task in three days. A number of amendments were made in the Committee, and I myself had the great satisfaction of getting many amendments of substance accepted and passed by the Committee.

The Report Stage on June the 14th occupied about five hours, and a fair number of further amendments were made, some moved by the Government, but most of them by private members, including three and some consequential ones which I succeeded in getting made : one of my amendments, the passing of which pleased me considerably, was a new Clause providing for the equivalent of the Scottish " alimentary trust," which permits of funds being protected against the insolvency of, or alienation by,

the beneficiary: the Clause has now become Section 33 of the Trustee Act 1925, under which this form of trust is known as the "protective trust." Both the Solicitor-General and myself expressed our pleasure at having discovered something in Scottish law worth copying in England!

Two days later the third reading was passed without a division: the House of Lords at the request and on the advice of Lord Birkenhead agreed to all the Commons amendments *en bloc*, and soon afterwards the Royal Assent completed this truly monumental piece of legislation.

A few observations remain to be made about it. The Act is a wonderful example of the way in which Parliament can deal thoroughly and effectively with difficult and intricate legislation relating to business of a non-party nature: true, it was largely the work of the legal profession outside Parliament: but the lawyers in both Houses proved themselves fully competent to deal with the legislative part of the work, and other members of both Houses adopted a praiseworthy policy of "masterly inactivity" on a matter they did not understand: and when they found that leaders whom they trusted, and who did understand such matters, had given their careful consideration and attention to and were in favour of the Bill, they felt that after all the lawyers were not stealing a march on them! The Bill, the longest then on record, was carried through the House of Commons in a space of time almost as short as the Bill was long, less than six whole Parliamentary days: but this was only after careful and skilled examination following on a long period of preliminary work by Parliamentary Committees.

In the whole course of the Bill's passage through the House of Commons, there was only one division: that was in the Standing Committee on an amendment, of no very great importance: it was resisted by the Government, mainly on considerations of simplicity, and was defeated by a large majority. It was inevitable, as Birkenhead had himself foreseen and stated, that in such a Bill there must be mistakes or omissions which would need amendment by subsequent legislation: but a main feature of the scheme was that this Act should establish on sound lines a radical change in the whole system of real property law, which should be followed up by a number of further Acts dealing with the various branches of law affected by this big change—Acts which would be largely of the nature of Consolidation or adaptation of existing Statute law, such as a Trustee Act, a Settled Land Act, a Land

Charges Act, an Administration of Estates Act, and so on, which would give an opportunity for some of these amendments. The Bill was not to come into operation until after time had been allowed for such further legislation. All these further Acts were carried through in due course within the next three years.

Among other slight oversights in the Bill, was a curious one which I discovered soon after its passing, and which resulted in my addressing a question in the House to the Prime Minister, as to whether he had realized that after the Act had been in operation for a few years, the abolition of copyholds would mean putting an end to those "offices of profit" the Stewardships of the Chiltern Hundreds and of the Manor of Northstead, acceptance of which was the only way in which a member of Parliament could resign his seat: the Prime Minister replied that he would consider with the Attorney-General whether in the Consolidating legislation which would follow upon the Law of Property Act, it might not be desirable to retain in existence permanently "those ancient and lucrative offices": in due course, this was done and those picturesque offices of profit with neither duties to be performed nor remuneration to be received, have been permanently preserved by Statute as a means for enabling a member to retire from the House of Commons.

On the 17th of July a dinner was given in Gray's Inn Hall in honour of the Lord Chancellor, and to celebrate the passing of the Act, by some of his old friends and people associated with him in the Bill, at which I had the pleasure of being present: after the general company broke up, F. E., with some of his old Oxford friends, adjourned to the Common Room, where I remember we sat up till 3 a.m., and F. E. delighted us with stories of some of his experiences in his early days at the Bar. A tragic incident occurred at this dinner, which fortunately was unknown until the next day to all but three or four of those present. As a sort of compliment to the Inn, who had kindly lent the Hall, a few young students of the Inn had been invited to the dinner: before the end of the third course, one of these students, who had been badly injured in the War, and was known to be in a rather dangerous state of health, slipped off his chair: two men sitting by him, at once pulled him up, and taking him by the arms "marched him" out of the Hall: he was generally supposed to have fainted, but in fact he was dead when he was "marched out."

CHAPTER VI

THE END OF THE COALITION, AND THE PARLIAMENT OF 1923

ON Friday 4th August, 1922, the House rose for the autumn recess, and adjourned to November 14th. During the summer of 1922 when the Parliament was getting near its statutory end, a section of the Conservative Party set to work to put an end to the Coalition, believing (as turned out to be correct) that the General Election, which could not be long delayed, would result in a Conservative majority, able to form an entirely Conservative Government. Many leading members of the Party, on the other hand, including Birkenhead, were strongly in favour of continuing to work with their Liberal colleagues and so continuing an anti-Labour Party coalition: there were many discussions between prominent and influential members of the Party, both Peers and members of the House of Commons, and feelings ran high on both sides. Ultimately it was decided to refer the question to a meeting of Conservative members of both Houses, and thus came about the celebrated Conservative Party meeting at the Carlton Club on the 18th of October. Bonar Law had for some time been in bad health, and was generally thought to be retiring from active political work: the meeting was therefore presided over by Austen Chamberlain, who favoured a continuance of the Coalition.

I went to this Carlton Club Meeting like many others in some doubt as to what line to take. On the whole I was in favour of the Coalition being continued, but only under a Conservative Prime Minister. I think this was undoubtedly the view of most members of the Conservative Party, and a resolution which was proposed by Pretyma, and seconded by Colonel Lane-Fox, was intended to have that effect, and not to bring about a breach with the National Liberals, or to advocate a purely Conservative Government. Austen Chamberlain, however, absolutely and firmly refused to agree to any such arrangement: he made it clear that so far as he was concerned he supported a continuation of the Coalition and that under the leadership of Lloyd George as Prime Minister. This was very displeasing to most of those present, including myself; and when Bonar Law unexpectedly put in a late appearance and addressed the meeting, urging that

the Conservative Party should endeavour to obtain a majority at the Election and to form a Conservative Government, and expressing his willingness to try and form such a Government, the end of the Coalition became a certainty. Members like myself preferred this to what we regarded as a semi-dictatorship of Lloyd George.

Owing to an important business appointment, I had to leave the meeting before the final vote was taken ; but had I remained I should have voted with the majority, in favour of terminating the Coalition, because I felt very strongly in favour of a change of Prime Minister : I had thought this could be arranged and would be agreed to by Lloyd George without a break-up of the Coalition.

We all had a strong feeling of gratitude to Lloyd George for all he had done during the War, and we had no wish to see him out of the Government. A suggestion had been made that he should become Secretary for the Colonies, and should take a tour of the Empire, partly by way of a rest from politics and the House of Commons, and I still cannot help thinking that if he had done this it would have been a happy solution. But as Prime Minister, he dominated the Government to an extent which could no longer be tolerable to the Conservative Party : this was not altogether his fault ; it was a relic of the War, when with the full concurrence and support of the Conservatives he occupied a position which, though necessary in war-time, was not in accordance with our normal constitutional practice ; and he was apt to be regarded as still in the same position of power, so long as he remained Prime Minister.

The uncompromising and somewhat aggressive attitude adopted by Austen Chamberlain surprised many of us, and even before Bonar Law's speech, tended to make us support the break up of the Coalition : I believe it was partly due to an unfortunate misunderstanding on Austen's part. The meeting was somewhat excited and at one point there were loud murmurs of " Traitor " from some of those present ; this was meant for Birkenhead, who had just come in late to the meeting, and with whom some of the anti-Coalition members were very angry : but Austen is said to have thought it was meant for him, and an accusation of that kind was one which he with his sensitive disposition was certain to feel keenly resentful about.

The end of the Coalition involved the final dissolution of one of the most remarkable and successful political partnerships ever seen in this country.

Lloyd George and Bonar Law were not only of different parties holding widely divergent political views: it would have been difficult to find two statesmen so different from each other in their mental outlook and personal characteristics: each one's good qualities were so good as to amount at times almost to failings: each of them has publicly acknowledged his own weaknesses, which were compensated by the other's opposite virtues: Lloyd George was quick, almost rash in decision, impatient of obstruction and regardless of minor details: Bonar Law was cautious, almost timid in coming to a decision, careful to examine obstacles and meticulous in attention to details: either man by himself might well have brought the country perilously near defeat in the War; between them, they brought the country to victory. They were firmly united by a mutual admiration of each other's merits, and by a common devoted patriotism and a love of their fellowmen: thus they worked together in complete harmony throughout the War and so long as the transfer from a state of war to normal conditions required complete national unity: but as that condition of affairs tended to be overshadowed by questions of national domestic policy, the very virtues which had held them together along one broad road, led them again into diverging paths in politics, though their personal friendship and mutual respect for each other continued up to Bonar Law's death at a comparatively young age.

Immediately after the decision of the Carlton Club meeting, Lloyd George and his Government resigned. Lloyd George advised the King to send for Bonar Law, who formed a Conservative Party Government and advised an immediate dissolution: the General Election in November resulted in a clear Conservative majority: the Conservatives generally accepted the leadership of Bonar Law, though none of the Conservative members of the late Government who had endeavoured to keep the Coalition in being, joined the new Government, they did not go into any active opposition, and any tendency to a split in the Conservative Party gradually disappeared.

CHAPTER VII

PRAYERS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ITS PLACES OF WORSHIP AND ATTENDANCES AT DIVINE SERVICE

PARLIAMENT has always associated religious observances with its work, and much might be written about its many and varied arrangements for attendances at church and for special sermons and so on in past centuries, and particularly during the many periods of religious strife. The custom of having prayers said at the commencement of each day's session probably dates from the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the Speaker himself commenced the daily proceedings by saying a prayer. "Prayers" in something very like the present use became customary in the reign of Charles II, and has, with slight variations, continued up to the present time as the preliminary to the opening of each day's sitting.

The present usage, which dates back with but slight and only occasional variations for very many years, is as follows : When the Speaker enters the House he does so in a procession : the Serjeant-at-Arms bearing the Mace is preceded by one of the messengers : then comes the Speaker with his train-bearer, followed by his Chaplain and his Secretary. Before the Speaker enters the House, a messenger standing at the Bar, loudly announces, "Speaker"—whereupon silence ensues and members rise and stand in their places to receive him. The Speaker goes not to his Chair but to the Table, where he remains while his Chaplain at his side reads prayers, after which the Speaker takes the Chair and the Chaplain leaves the House. Prayers consist of the 67th Psalm, the Lord's Prayer, prayers for the King and for the Royal Family and one or two collects concluding with the following very beautiful and specially appropriate prayer well worth quoting in full, as it is seldom heard by, and consequently little known to people who have not been members of Parliament :

Almighty God, by whom alone kings reign, and princes decree justice : and from whom alone cometh all counsel, wisdom and understanding : we, thine unworthy servants, here gathered together in thy Name, do most humbly beseech thee to send down thy Heavenly Wisdom from above, to direct and guide us, in all our consultations : and grant that, we, having thy fear always before our eyes, and laying aside all private interests, prejudices, and partial affections, the result of all our counsels may be to

the glory of thy blessed Name, the maintenance of true religion and justice, the safety, honour and happiness of the King, the publick wealth, peace, and tranquillity of the realm, and the uniting and knitting together of the hearts of all persons and estates within the same in true Christian love and charity one towards another, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

A curious story is told as to the origin and authorship of this prayer which has been in use for many years, not only in the House of Commons but also in the House of Lords, where prayers in the same form are said by one of the Bishops. A Select Committee, it is said, was set up to consider and settle the form of the prayers to be said at the commencement of each day's sittings: the Committee decided on the 67th Psalm, the Lord's Prayer, the prayers for the Sovereign and the Royal Family and so on: but they desired to include a prayer specially appropriate for use by Parliament, asking for God's blessing upon their work for the nation; they asked the Chairman of the Committee to compose such a prayer for their consideration: he gave much anxious attention to this task without settling anything to his satisfaction: but one night he retired to bed after thinking much on the matter and dreamed a dream: he dreamt that an Angel woke him and told him to get up and write what he (the Angel) should dictate, and then dictated this prayer: the Chairman met his Committee the following day, told them of his dream, said he thought the prayer was a perfect one, but that unfortunately he could not remember it! He promised to go home and to try his hardest to recollect it: on returning to his house and going into his room, he found lying there a sheet of paper on which in his own handwriting was the prayer which the Angel had dictated, and which he must have written down at the Angel's dictation in his sleep: he submitted it to his Committee who approved and adopted it without alteration as divinely inspired. The story may be a curious one, but it is far from absurd: it is well known in these days, that the brain may continue working during sleep with the result that a "dream" may solve a problem which the sleeper has been thinking about.

There is no compulsion on members to attend prayers and many find these few minutes convenient for closing up work they have been engaged upon, or collecting such papers as they want to take into the Chamber; there is, however, especially on important days, this inducement to attend—a member can upon the conclusion of prayers place a card with his name upon it, in the seat

he is occupying, and by so doing he reserves that seat for the remainder of the day's sitting. There is usually a fairly good attendance, even when this inducement does not operate. All the doors into the Chamber are closed during prayers, to prevent interruption, and the ceremony is conducted with the utmost reverence.

There has, for a good many years, been a short prayer meeting every day a few minutes before the assembling of the House, held in the room of the Serjeant-at-Arms. Few members, I believe, even know of this : I did not come to know of it until many years after I first became a member.

The House of Commons has its own little chapel in the precincts, St. Stephen's Crypt Chapel, a part of the old Palace of Westminster which survived the great fire of 1834 ; it is immediately under the building, on the site of what is called St. Stephen's Hall, formerly St. Stephen's Chapel, where the House sat in the days before the fire of 1834. Built in the late years of the twelfth century, the Crypt Chapel is a very beautiful architectural gem : after the Reformation when the interior was all entirely covered with plaster, it went through many vicissitudes : with its walls plastered and whitewashed it was used at various times as the Speaker's dining-room for his official dinners, as a lumber-room for storage purposes, and as a stable in which, it is said, Cromwell stabled his horses. It is probable that the plaster did much to preserve its beautiful interior. It remained in that condition until some years after the fire, when it was restored under Pugin's superintendence to what was believed to be as nearly as possible its original condition. There is a tradition that this restoration was brought about through a workman accidentally breaking down a bit of the plaster and finding, as he thought, a lump of gold, which turned out to be part of the gilding of some of the elaborately carved and illuminated work. Now perfectly fitted up and carefully kept, it is one of the most beautiful historic monuments of the past, and unsurpassed, I believe, as an example of crypt architecture, even in Italy. The richly embroidered altar-cloth, a gift from Queen Victoria, is believed to have been worked by Queen Elizabeth's Ladies-in-Waiting. A notable feature of this chapel is the little baptistery at the north-west end, with its magnificent jewelled font. The chapel is now used for proper purposes only : fairly often it is used for baptisms of children of members (one of my sons was christened there in 1919), less often for weddings, and

sometimes it is used for celebrations of Holy Communion or other services, held at the request of members : but no regular services are held there.

Happily this delightful and historical part of the Palace of Westminster has escaped war damage.

St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, adjacent to Westminster Abbey, is the Parish Church of the House of Commons. The church has very few resident parishioners outside the Palace of Westminster, but for many years it has attracted a large and fairly regular congregation, owing to the type of clergy by whom it has been served, the excellence of its music, and the general conduct of its services.

A number of seats are specially reserved for members and a considerable number of the members who are in London for week-ends attend the Sunday services : most of the Speakers of recent times and their families and households have been constant and regular worshippers in the church. Memorial Services for members or past members of the House are frequently held there, as are also weddings and baptisms of members of the families of members of the House, as parishioners. The church is full of memorials and tablets to the memory of former members of the House of Commons : indeed so much is this the case that it produced rather a difficult problem a good many years ago, through lack of available space, and it has now for a long time been recognized that no memorials can be put up except for cogent reasons or in memory of specially distinguished members.

Services of Intercession or Thanksgiving and services on great national occasions are less usual at St. Margaret's than they used to be, such services being now usually held in larger buildings such as St. Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey.

Usually the Rector of St. Margaret's is also the Chaplain of the House—or more correctly the Chaplain to Mr. Speaker : but this is not necessarily so. The late Canon Carnegie had for three years been Rector of St. Margaret's, when in 1916 Mr. Speaker Lowther appointed him Speaker's Chaplain. He resigned that office in 1936, but remained Rector of St. Margaret's until his death a few years later : Mr. Speaker FitzRoy appointed Canon A. C. Don as his Chaplain on Canon Carnegie's resignation, and on Canon Carnegie's death Canon Don succeeded him in 1941 as Rector of St. Margaret's.

The close association of this church with the House of Commons dates from the early years of the seventeenth century,

from which time there are records of many services held there expressly for the House of Commons. Since that time grants of money have been made by the House from time to time for repairs, improvements, or other requirements of the church.

The Parochial Church Council now consists of members of the House, and in earlier times before such Councils came into existence, the vestry-men were also usually members of the House.

Among recent services held in St. Paul's Cathedral under the special auspices of the House of Commons or Parliament, attended by most of the members of the House of Commons and many of the Peers in the habit of attending in the House of Lords, have been the Thanksgiving Service in 1919 after the conclusion of the 1914-18 War, the service on the occasion of King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935 and the Service of Thanksgiving for the victories in North Africa in 1943. There was also a Memorial Service for the late President Roosevelt, shortly after his death in April 1945, and the great Services of Thanksgiving after V.2 day in June 1945, and after the end of the War in August 1945.

CHAPTER VIII

A GREAT SPEAKERSHIP.

EDWARD ALGERNON FITZROY—1928-43

FITZROY became Speaker in June 1928. Not only was he a great Speaker, but his period of office covered an unusual number of important events in which the Speaker had a special part to play: it covered the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary, the death of one King, the Accession and Abdication of another, and the Accession and Coronation of yet another: it covered also the outbreak of the World War in 1939 and over three years of that war. In his own domestic affairs it saw his Golden Wedding Anniversary, a unique event in a Speaker's term of office: and his Speakership was ended by his unexpected death in Speaker's House in the Palace of Westminster while he was still in office. He was the only Speaker but one who died while in office as Speaker, and the only one who had died in Speaker's House.

Edward Algernon FitzRoy was the younger son of the third Lord Southampton. Educated at Eton and at Sandhurst, he joined the 1st Life Guards and retired as a Lieutenant. He rejoined his regiment on the outbreak of war in 1914 and was wounded in the first battle of Ypres. He returned to France in command of the mounted troops of the Guards Division in 1916 and was present at the battle of Loos.

In 1900 he was elected to the House of Commons as Member for South Northants (later the Daventry Division): in 1906 for personal reasons he did not stand again, but in 1910 he won back the seat and held it up to his death. He was Deputy Chairman under Mr. James Hope (afterwards Lord Rankeillour) in 1922 till the Labour Party after the General Election of 1924 departed from the usual custom of re-electing these officers of the House, and again after the fall of the Labour Government when Mr. Hope and he again became Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively until June 1928: then on the resignation of Mr. Whitley he was unanimously elected Speaker.

On the 2nd of June, 1928, Mr. Speaker Whitley made known to his constituents in Halifax his intention to resign on June the 18th. The House consequently had more time for considering who should succeed him than has sometimes been the case: a

number of members were suggested : two obvious "possibles" were the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, Hope and FitzRoy : but there was in some quarters a feeling against the promotion of a Chairman to the Speakership, lest it should become a custom : moreover, there was a strong and widespread desire to avoid a contest and there was a very general belief (which ultimately turned out to be incorrect) that the Labour Party, many of whom had lately been at loggerheads with the Chair in Committee, would not support either the Chairman or Deputy Chairman. When however the Labour Party formally intimated to Mr. Hope that if he were nominated they would support him, his election appeared likely to be unanimous ; the only objection to him was a feeling amongst some few members against a Roman Catholic. Mr. Hope, however, made it known that he did not desire to be Speaker, and then, when it was found that Captain FitzRoy was willing to accept the office, and that the Labour Party would not oppose him, it became clear that he was the most acceptable of all the members who had been talked of, and that his election if he were proposed would be unanimous : there was no longer any doubt, and on the 20th June he was unanimously elected : his election as Speaker was proposed by Sir Robert Sanders who, when Whitley's intended resignation was first made known, was regarded as his probable successor, and seconded by Mr. C. W. Bowerman, a veteran member of the Labour Party. Had Hope desired to be Speaker, FitzRoy, as he himself told the House in his speech on the day of his election, would never have stood in his way, and Hope would undoubtedly have been elected unanimously. There was much speculation at the time as to the reason for Hope's unwillingness to become Speaker : some thought he feared that his being a Roman Catholic might make him unacceptable in certain quarters of the House ; but, in fact, that high office did not appeal to him : he had occupied the Committee Chair for about seven years, and good Chairman though he was, the position was not very congenial to him : had he consulted only his own wishes, he would not have occupied it so long : his personal predilections and aspirations were rather in the direction of more active political life and Government Office : previously to becoming Chairman he had been a Government Whip for four or five years and Financial Secretary to the Minister of Munitions for two years.

The new Speaker though he had been over twenty years a member of the House, and for some six or seven years Deputy Chair-

man, was less intimately known to many of his fellow-members than some who had been in the House a far shorter time. Somewhat reserved in manner, he had never sought popularity, publicity, or prominence : in his speech " submitting himself to the will of the House " he said that his friends told him he was not effusive, and saying that a warm heart was often concealed beneath a frigid exterior, declared that he had a great love for his fellow-members : that part of his speech was a remarkable example of self-revelation and we all learnt in following years his love for his fellow-members. In his early days as Speaker, some doubted whether he had sufficient firmness to be a success, and few foresaw the high reputation he was to acquire in his office : he often gave one an impression of being inclined to follow the line of least resistance : in fact, he was but feeling his way with that caution and modesty which his more intimate friends knew well. It was the first occasion in modern times of a soldier becoming Speaker, and he had not had the legal training which many of his predecessors in office had found so useful : but he was remarkably quick in making good any lack of legal training and soon proved himself not only capable of understanding a complicated Bill, but a master of procedure in the House : so much so, that I am confident that had he chosen the Bar as his profession, he would have achieved success.

In figure and personal appearance he was fortunate : tall and good-looking, with what may be called a good soldierly bearing, he was a dignified personality, and his conduct was consistent with his appearance.

While he was an ordinary back-bench member he did not often take part in debates : when he did, it was because he had something he wanted to say : he said it well, clearly, and briefly, but he had not made any great reputation for his speeches in the House. After he became Speaker, and indeed for years before as Deputy Chairman, he was debarred from taking part in debates. There were, however, occasions when as Speaker it was his duty to make a speech—a speech which many would have treated as a pure formality, but when FitzRoy had to play an important part in a great ceremony he was not a man to do it as a mere formality, and his speeches on such occasions gained him a deservedly high reputation.

Among such speeches were those which he made in Westminster Hall on great occasions described elsewhere in this book as having taken place there, including the visit of H.M. King

George V and Queen Mary at the Silver Jubilee in May 1935, the Empire Parliamentary Association luncheon in May 1937, and the visit of the French President (M. Lebrun) and Madame Lebrun in March 1939.

A speech which he made on a very different occasion, and which refers especially to the office of Speaker, deserves special mention here. It was on the occasion of his unveiling a tablet commemorating the rebuilding of the chapel of Burford Priory, on the 11th December, 1937. Burford Priory had been bought by Sir Archibald and Lady Southby: it was for many years the home of Speaker Lenthall, who had rebuilt the chapel: the chapel had again fallen into ruins: the Southbys had it rebuilt and completely restored in, as far as possible, its original condition, using the old stones for the purpose: they were anxious to get the Speaker to unveil the commemorative tablet: Sir Archibald therefore asked me to try to persuade him to do so: but I found that the Speaker, far from requiring any persuasion, was pleased to be asked to do so. I believe he thought then, as he said in his speech when he did it, that it was peculiarly fitting, and therefore part of his duty, that this unveiling should be done by the direct descendant in office of one of the most notable historical characters who had ever held the office of Speaker of the House of Commons. The gathering on the occasion was a small one, consisting mainly of the family and personal friends of Sir Archibald and Lady Southby, and I believe I was the only member of Parliament besides the Speaker and Sir Archibald who was privileged to be present. Like every speech of the kind which FitzRoy made, that which he delivered on this occasion was prepared with the greatest care. It was, in my opinion, so good that it seemed unfortunate that there should be no full report or copy of it. So one day soon afterwards, I asked him if he had any copy or notes of it which he would let me copy: he said he had made some notes for it which I could have if he could find them, as he supposed he could: but it seems to have gone out of the minds of both of us, and I heard no more of it from him. After his death, his family and his secretary, at my request, made a search among his papers for these notes, but without success. But quite recently his widow (now Viscountess Daventry) found his notes in his own handwriting, and has been kind enough to allow me to make use of them. At this distance of time I should find it difficult even with these notes to reconstruct the speech, so I will set out a copy of the note which is as follows:

Tablet to commemorate the re-dedication of the Burford Chapel, originally built in 1662 by William Lenthall, Speaker of the Long Parliament.

Lenthall was Speaker of the House of Commons from 1649 to 1660, a term of 20 years.

It is not unsuitable, and I have great pleasure in doing so, that after nearly 300 years, at the re-dedication of this Chapel, his direct successor in the office of Speaker should unveil this tablet.

During the period that Lenthall was Speaker he passed through some of the most momentous times of English history, and more particularly in the history of the House of Commons and the British Parliament.

Like all Speakers he was criticized for his conduct in the chair, but the most outstanding event during his Speakership, and for which he has been chiefly remembered, was when Charles I, the only King of England who has ever penetrated into the House of Commons in session, came into the House and demanded that the five most prominent opponents of his Government should be handed over to him on the charge of High Treason.

On the request being made to him, Lenthall made his famous reply, "May it please your Majesty I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am."

He thereby established the two great principles which remain to this day: The independence of Parliament and that the Speaker is the servant of the House. If for no other reasons than these Lenthall's memory deserves to be preserved.

These two principles are two at any rate of the corner stones of our Constitution, and have always been jealously guarded throughout the years.

The important part of his speech varied but little from the actual words of this note: when he referred to all Speakers being criticized for their conduct in the Chair, he made a humorous reference to "many criticisms of the present Speaker, some no doubt thoroughly justified but others less so, and some cancelled out by others": he effectively elaborated his note in regard to the "two great principles" mentioned at the end, especially that of the Speaker being the servant of the House, by which he of course meant that, as the servant of the House, the Speaker's first duty was to the House rather than to the King or any other authority.

Another brief speech on a still very different occasion was that which he made on the occasion of his Golden Wedding in November 1941, when in one of the large committee-rooms of the House he and his wife met a large gathering of members and he expressed thanks for the antique silver cup which was presented to him, with an address of congratulation and good wishes from members of the House: on that occasion his speech was quite an impromptu one; but it was an excellent speech and charmed everyone who heard it.

It had been considered that a Speaker's golden wedding being an event of a purely domestic nature, and in no way connected with his official position, was not a matter upon which it would be proper for the House to take any official cognizance, but it was inevitable, and in no way unseemly or objectionable, that reference to the happy event should be made in the House. After Questions on that day the Prime Minister in a few happily worded sentences offered to the Speaker the congratulations and good wishes of the House : he was followed by the other Party Leaders who earnestly endorsed the Prime Minister's words, and the Speaker briefly replied and expressed his thanks.

In July of 1930 he had the unusual and unpleasant task of being called upon to "admonish" a member in the House. The member in question had made a speech outside the House derogatory to members : the matter was raised in the House and referred to the Committee of Privileges : that Committee's report was agreed to by the House, and the House passed a resolution that the member in question had committed a breach of the Privileges of the House and "that he be admonished by Mr. Speaker for the breach of Privilege that he has committed." Thereupon, as the official report states :

Mr. Speaker called upon the member by name, and he standing up in his place uncovered, Mr. Speaker sitting in the Chair covered, addressed him saying that in accordance with the Commands of the House he had to admonish him, which he accordingly did. When he had concluded his admonition, the House ordered "that the admonition delivered by Mr. Speaker be entered upon the journals of the House."

Members who were present regarded the Speaker's powerful and dignified "admonition" as a far more severe punishment than they had expected it to be.

It will be noted that on this occasion the Speaker remained seated and "covered," which means that he donned his three-cornered black hat, which, though seldom worn, is part of the Speaker's official costume and is always carried by him when entering the House, and when attending in the House of Lords and on similar occasions : while he is in the Chair he places it in a receptacle provided for the purpose on the left arm of the Chair : like the wearing of the "black cap" by a Judge when passing sentence of death, this wearing of the hat is a completing of the wearer's official dress, done to mark the solemnity of the occasion.

A disorderly incident of an unusual nature took place in July 1930, when a member who had been acting as one of the "tellers"

in a division, immediately after the announcement of the figures, seized the Mace from the table and attempted to take it out of the House, exclaiming something to the effect that "this is a damned disgrace." As he reached the Bar of the House he was laid hold of by the Serjeant-at-Arms and his messengers, and the Mace was restored to its place. The Speaker immediately "named" him for "grossly disorderly conduct." The Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, then moved that he be suspended from the service of the House, which was carried by 324 to 4. This very lenient treatment met with much disapproval, and on the next full sitting day, the inadequacy of the penalty was the subject of a Question to the Prime Minister: but he adhered to his view that it would suit the dignity of the House far better to leave the matter as it stood than to have any further reference made to it.

I had come to know FitzRoy well while he was Deputy Chairman, when I often did duty in Committee as one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, and we had always been good friends: but when on his election as Speaker I became Deputy Chairman we soon became more intimate, and during the eleven or twelve years that I was Chairman and he Deputy Speaker, we worked together in the closest harmony and friendship, and often had long talks, sometimes serious and sometimes less so, about our respective duties, and other subjects.

Once, having arranged for my Deputy and a Temporary Chairman to take the Chair, I had lunch with him and his wife alone; at that time Speaker's House was under repair and he was temporarily occupying the house of the Serjeant-at-Arms adjoining the Clock Tower: one of us laughingly suggested that it was about time someone was confined in the Clock Tower again, to prevent that form of punishment falling into disuse: but Mrs. FitzRoy exclaimed, "Oh! don't do that while we are here, for the only entrance to the prisoner's rooms is through this room, by that door, and what is more I am using one of them as my maid's room!" So I said, "Then we shall have to borrow prison accommodation in the Tower!"

I believe the last case of the House of Commons confining anyone in the Clock Tower was the case of Rhodes's solicitor, Hawkesley, for refusing to answer questions put to him by a Select Committee about the Jameson Raid in 1900.

But probably on the occasion in 1928 when a member was ordered to be "admonished" by the Speaker, that member

would have been committed to the Clock Tower had it not been just at the end of the Session, which would automatically have terminated his confinement.

At times when I took the Big Chair, in order to relieve the Speaker, he would tell me whom he was proposing to call next and would possibly make some general observations about other names on his list as to whom he thought should be, or need not be called. He was very careful about trying to call any member who appeared to have special knowledge of the subject, or other good reasons for being called, but subject to this and to any provisional promise to any member to try and get him in he would say, "There is my list and you can please yourself about whom you call." There was one member who frequently took part in debates and was in many ways a useful member of no mean ability, but usually regarded as rather a bore, and who was a subject of some chaff between us as to which of us could leave the calling of that member to the other: one day when I went to relieve him he said to me, "I am sorry for you, but I am afraid I must ask you to call so-and-so." I merely replied, "Well, that is my bad luck." He had arranged to come back to the Chair at 6.30 and arrived punctually at that time: I had called the member in question just a minute before he returned, and so I said to him, "You see, I have done as you told me; I called your friend just one minute ago." He laughed, saying, "Well, you have got me this time!" He had the pleasure of listening to the remainder of half an hour's dull speech! However, he got back on me! Soon afterwards when I went to relieve him, the same member had just begun speaking, and he said, "You see what I have done for you!"

His Majesty King George VI has always followed the example of his Royal predecessors since the reign of Queen Victoria, by opening new Sessions of Parliament in person: during the War these state openings of Parliament were shorn of the usual state pageantry, and the King always appeared in service uniform instead of in the full royal robes of normal times. When the time was approaching for the opening of the new Session of 1941-2, the two Houses, owing to the damage which had been done to the Houses of Parliament, were sitting in Church House, where the accommodation was much smaller and more inconvenient, and the room which was used as the Chamber of the House of Lords was specially small and awkward for this ceremonial purpose. Notwithstanding this, the King still decided to open the new

Session in person, and did so in Church House. Thinking it well to inspect Church House and the accommodation there beforehand, he arranged to do so privately when the Houses were not actually sitting, and was taken round by the Speaker and the Speaker's Secretary, Sir Ralph Verney. He remarked that the accommodation was small and inconvenient, suggesting that the Chamber of the House of Commons would be far less inconvenient if he could do the opening ceremony there; but the Speaker ventured to remind His Majesty of the last occasion on which a sovereign had entered the House of Commons while it was sitting, and suggested that this was an undesirable precedent to follow. That, of course, was when Charles I entered the House with the object of arresting the five members, but found they had flown, and Speaker Lenthall gave his famous reply to the King's questions about them. There was some piquancy in the fact of this reminder to His Majesty being given by Speaker FitzRoy. The King ultimately performed the ceremony in the temporary Chamber of the House of Lords.

During his term of office Fitzroy was called upon to give many important rulings and decisions; many of his rulings were ones which had to be given at once and others were given privately: but whenever he had to give one of substantial importance in the House, and was able to take time for consideration, he read out in the House a well-considered and clear statement.

A little while after the commencement of the War, some difficult problems arose from the frequency of secret sittings of the House: it was obvious that debates and decisions of great importance might take place in these secret sittings, and might even result in a defeat or resignation of the Government: it was certain that such secret sittings might have considerable effect on the action of the House in subsequent open sittings and thus make it very difficult to preserve strict but essential secrecy; they might bring about unjustified public criticism of the House, or make some public action by the House appear inexplicable, or obviously contrary to what the country was entitled to expect from the House. The Speaker rendered valuable service by his keen foresight into and appreciation of the difficulties and dangers inherent in these secret sittings: he considered that if members insisted on secret sittings the House must take steps to deal with these problems: he was personally averse to taking the responsibility of initiating steps for dealing with these difficulties without the consent or authority of the House. He summoned a meeting

of a few leading members and officials of the House to consult with him : as a result, arrangements were made which seemed likely to (and so far have in fact done so) meet all the difficulties which had been foreseen : they necessarily imposed considerable extra work and responsibility on the Speaker, but this he accepted without complaint, subject to the approval of the House : this was given without question when the proposed arrangements were announced in the House. Briefly these arrangements were based upon the Speaker being authorized to make a public report of each secret sitting, in which he should make known such information as he might regard as necessary.

Reliable as FitzRoy was in his daily arrival for the opening of the House, there were days on which he failed—to be exact two, or possibly three, in the fifteen years of his Speakership.

On one of these days he was rather worried about an awkward subject which was coming before the House, and a very distinguished ex-Cabinet Minister had been in serious conference with him about it, and so delayed him that he was not ready to start the procession until a few minutes after the usual time : the delay was not sufficient to be of any serious consequence, but those whom it did inconvenience were the other members of the Speaker's procession, for he did not mean to be later than he could help ! The pace of the usual slow march was accelerated, and though they never did anything so undignified as to break into the double, they were driven into a quick march which must have exceeded the pace which any of them had ever attained to before in the corridors !

On the other day (or one of the other two days), he was far later and did not go to change out of his ordinary clothes until after he should have been in the House. I remember it well, because I was standing at the door behind the Chair, wondering why the procession had not arrived, when a message was brought to me that he would be late, and would I carry on till he arrived : the Mace, therefore, was brought in, and after prayers I took the Chair as Deputy Speaker, and carried on with Questions until they were nearly over, when the Speaker came in from behind the Chair as he was accustomed to do when I had been temporarily relieving him from duty. It was probably the day when, driving up to the House from Hambleden in very bad weather, his car broke down, and he had to continue the journey by train from Slough. In any event that did happen to him one day, and if it was not on the day I have referred to, it must have been on the (possible) third

occasion of his being late : if so it did not result in his being so late as to make any impression on my memory.

He was equally careful, too, that when a Summons was coming for the House to attend in the House of Lords for a Royal Commission there should be no unavoidable delay through his not being ready to receive Black Rod on his arrival : the Lords have often had to hold back sending Black Rod for a short time, owing to a division in the Commons being in progress or something of that kind : but so far as the Speaker was concerned, he was always careful to see that there should be no delay on his part. Often such a Summons would be arranged for a time when the House was in Committee or when a Deputy Speaker was temporarily on duty in the Chair : on such occasions the Speaker was always sitting at the end of the front bench, ready to go into the Chair to receive Black Rod immediately on his arrival. More especially, of course, was he always ready for the Summons when it was to attend the King : he was therefore very annoyed on one occasion at hearing that the King had complained of the Commons having kept him an unduly long time before appearing at the Bar of the House of Lords : upon investigation it was clearly established that the House of Commons was not to blame ; owing to the acting Black Rod being unaccustomed to the exact details of the ceremony, he had been late in arriving to summon them. But on the next occasion of the kind, owing to the special anxiety of the Lords to avoid a similar situation, the Commons were summoned several minutes too soon, with the result that they were kept waiting for some time at the Bar before the King arrived : this was too much for FitzRoy and he wrote a formal protest to the House of Lords about this indignity to the Commons, and in due course he received an ample apology : he told me what he had done and of the apology he had received, and that he intended the incident to be recorded in the Journals of the House : this, however, was not done for he had overlooked the fact that nothing can be recorded in the Journals unless it has been referred to in the House, and being the last person to cause unnecessary fuss in public about an incident of this kind, he never reported it formally to the House at the time. Few members ever knew of this incident ; but he never permitted anything derogatory to the dignity or privileges of the House to pass unnoticed, as is evidenced by other incidents. When the House of Commons attends a Royal Commission in the House of Lords, certain formal courtesies are always exchanged : when the Speaker and Members of the House arrive at

the Bar of the House of Lords, they bow on their arrival three times to the Lord Chancellor and the other Commissioners, who are seated in front of the Throne in their Peers' Robes and wearing their Black Hats. The Commissioners acknowledge these bows by raising their hats to the Commons three times : similar bows and acknowledgments are repeated when the business of the Commission being finished the Commons retire. On one of these occasions, the Lord Chancellor and his colleagues omitted to raise their hats when the Commons withdrew. The Speaker instructed his Private Secretary to write to the Lord Chancellor, calling his attention to the omission. The Lord Chancellor at once wrote a letter in his own handwriting to the Speaker, apologizing for what had happened, saying he attached great importance to the observation of all the usual courtesies between the two Houses, and that the Speaker might rely upon it that such a thing should not occur again.

On another occasion, probably owing to some mistake on the part of one of the attendants, the Speaker and members of the House of Commons having gone to the House of Lords on a Summons to attend the King, found themselves locked in and unable to return to their House until after their Majesties had got clear of the Royal Gallery on their way back to the Royal Robing Room. The Speaker instructed his Secretary to see the officials of the House of Lords and to complain about what had been done. The Speaker's Secretary was, of course, assured that it was accidental and should not occur again.

FitzRoy, as a matter of course, continued the Speaker's Dinners and Levées which had been revived after the War by Speaker Whitley : he gave these regularly during his Speakership until they were again suspended on account of war, except during a period when they were impossible by reason of Speaker's House being under repair and not available for such purposes. He added to these functions less formal receptions, to which members of the House and their wives were invited, as were also a large number of other ladies and gentlemen of distinction.

He delighted, too, in the opportunities which occurred during his Speakership of using the old Speaker's State Coach, a vehicle very similar to the Royal State Coach. He used it to attend the great service in St. Paul's Cathedral on the occasion of King George the Fifth's Silver Jubilee, and again on the occasion of the Coronation of King George VI. As the coach had not been used for very many years, it was necessary to examine and test it to

see that it was practically usable and not liable to break down ; so it was taken out for a number of experimental drives in the early mornings before the usual traffic started : it was found to be thoroughly serviceable and FitzRoy had it and the heavy gorgeous harness and trappings repaired and fitted up. The great weight of the coach made it necessary to have suitable powerful horses to draw it. They were provided by a Brewery Company who had done so on previous occasions many years before : their magnificent dray horses were about the only ones suitable for the purpose : they provided also the coachmen, to drive the pair of horses, and two running footmen.

Prior to its use at the Silver Jubilee, the coach was taken for a rehearsal on the route of the procession, both as a test, and for timing purposes. A little anxiety was felt as to how it would manage the rather long and steep pull up Ludgate Hill, but this part of the rehearsal was quite satisfactory, and nothing went wrong on the day on the journey to St. Paul's and back. The coach is a very roomy one and the Speaker was accompanied in it by the Serjeant-at-Arms, with the Mace (the head of which stuck out through one of the windows), the Speaker's Chaplain, the Speaker's Secretary, and the Speaker's Train-bearer : the day before the procession to St. Paul's Cathedral I was present in Speaker's Court when the coach and its horses were brought round and the Speaker and others rehearsed the arrangement of their seating in the coach. Mrs. FitzRoy was also present on this occasion, and I asked her, "Where do you come in, in this procession, and how do you go?" She replied, "Oh! I am far superior to the Speaker, I shall just flash by his old coach in my modern Daimler car!" The footmen on the coach were fitted out by FitzRoy in his family livery specially made for the purpose. In accordance with the Speaker's historic right, he was attended by one Life-Guardsman (a trooper of his own old Regiment, the 1st Life Guards), who rode behind the coach. This procession of the Speaker in his state coach to St. Paul's was, as may be supposed, immensely pleasing to the crowd which lined the route, and was vociferously cheered during the whole journey to St. Paul's and back.

After that occasion, the comparatively short journey from Speaker's House to Westminster Abbey for the Coronation in 1936 was a comparatively easy matter. But it was carried out in the same way and with equal success and popularity.

FitzRoy had, for some years, suffered occasionally from

bronchial trouble, and on the evening of Tuesday the 16th February, 1943, having been in the Chair of the House through the day, he became very ill : at that time he was occasionally staying the night at Speaker's House : the house had been damaged by enemy action, but two or three small rooms had been made habitable to enable him to sleep there when he wished : usually he was living in his own private house at Hambleden-on-Thames. He would have driven down there that night but was too ill. Mrs. FitzRoy was telephoned to on the following morning and came up to Westminster, and remained with the Speaker in Speaker's House until his death : it then became known among his family and close associates at Westminster that he was very dangerously ill : his daughter, who was working in a hospital at Watford close to my house, came in to see us about a week before his death, and told me how bad he was ; on the following Monday, as arranged previously, I went to Speaker's House and spent some time with Mrs. FitzRoy, but he was too ill for me to see him and two days later, on Wednesday, March the 3rd, he passed away, just as Big Ben was chiming the hour at 2 p.m. Both Houses of Parliament were sitting at the time, and the news was at once conveyed to the officers of the two Houses. The House of Lords immediately adjourned as a mark of respect. The House of Commons, having no Speaker, could no longer function : therefore, the Deputy Speaker left the Chair, the Serjeant-at-Arms removed the Mace from its place on the Table, and placed it under the Table : then the Clerk Assistant (temporarily acting Clerk of the House) informed members of the Speaker's death and the Leader of the House moved that they adjourn till the following Thursday.

As I have mentioned, the death of the Speaker rendered it impossible for the House to sit, until a new Speaker had been elected. At the time the Speaker died, the Deputy Speaker, Colonel Clifton Brown, was occupying the Chair (I had resigned and left the House of Commons a few weeks before this), but owing to the form of the Deputy Speaker Act, the Deputy Speaker ceases to have any power or authority on the Speaker ceasing to hold office—whether by death or otherwise. The inconvenience and possibly serious difficulties which might arise from this fact had been foreseen for some time, and had been the subject of correspondence in *The Times*. Some years before, a Bill had been drafted to provide that in such a contingency as the death of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker should be empowered to act as

Speaker for a limited time in order to enable the House to continue to carry on its business until a new Speaker could be elected. All this had of course long been known to FitzRoy who had wished the Bill to be passed: he and I had in fact talked over the difficulties and technical troubles which might result from a Speaker's death, and the further troubles which might occur, as had been pointed out by certain Constitutional lawyers, in contingencies of a cognate nature, such as the death of the Speaker and both Deputy Speakers—not an impossible event in times of war and air-raids, or the possibility of its being unknown and uncertain whether the Speaker was alive or dead, or if dead, at what date or time he had died: such a state of affairs might quite conceivably arise if the Speaker were involved in some disaster from an air-raid or otherwise, when a considerable time might elapse before his fate could be certainly ascertained. It may be—I do not know—that the question of dealing with these less likely contingencies had something to do with no Bill having been brought before the House: but when FitzRoy became, as we knew, dangerously ill, hopes were expressed that the short and simple Bill necessary to deal only with the contingency of a Speaker's death, would be passed at once: his family were willing and indeed wishful that this should be done, and expressed the belief that it would be his wish. On the question of his wishes, I have no doubt whatever: he had far too much of what is generally called “sound common sense” to have any repugnance to precautions being taken against his death causing difficulties; but added to that, his devotion to, and real love for, the House of Commons would never have allowed any personal likes or dislikes of his own to stand for one moment in the way of the efficiency or convenience of the House. On the other hand, had the Bill been hurriedly passed just before his death, a certain section of the public might have accused the House or the Government of behaving in unseemly fashion: anyhow, it was not done, and in fact no serious difficulties arose: at the actual time of FitzRoy's death and of its being announced to the House, Navy estimates were being discussed, and the House had no very pressing business in prospect in the near future: but even a reading of this book will be sufficient to illustrate occasions on which the death of the Speaker and consequent inability of the House to continue working would have had most serious and disastrous consequences—for example during the debate on the Gold Standard (Amendment) Bill described later.

Members met again on the following Tuesday: as the official record runs "Members repaired to their seats" instead of the usual statement "The House met": the Mace was under the Table, and the usual and customary procedure for the election of a Speaker was followed: there had only been less than a complete week for members to consider whom they would choose, but fortunately at least one eminently well-qualified and suitable man was available.

Colonel Douglas Clifton Brown had established a good reputation as Deputy Chairman, which office he had filled during the last five years of my Chairmanship, and on my resignation only a few weeks before, he had been unanimously and with general approval elected to succeed me as Chairman. Other names were considered for the Speakership, and had their supporters, but all of them were holding office in the Government, which fact placed certain practical obstacles in the way of their election: when the day came Clifton Brown was the only one proposed and he was elected unanimously: on the following day, the King's approval was given in the usual way, and the House at once proceeded with its business.

The late Speaker's ashes were most appropriately buried in the House of Commons Church, St. Margaret's, Westminster. The funeral took place on the 8th of March, the Monday following his death. It was a dignified but simple ceremony and to members of the House who had known him so well, a very moving one. The coffin was taken from Speaker's House to St. Margaret's and then carried into the Church by Messengers of the House of Commons in a small procession of those who were accustomed to form the Speaker's Procession into the House every day: it was taken in by the big West door of the church through a guard of honour, formed by the Houses of Parliament Home Guard: the service was conducted by his great friend, Archbishop Lord Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Temple), and Canon Don, the Speaker's Chaplain and Rector of St. Margaret's.

The family mourners entered the church by the East door, generally used by the Speaker and members of the House, just before the coffin arrived at the West door. The large congregation included representatives of the King, and of the Queen and Queen Mary, all the High Commissioners for the Dominions, Ambassadors of many foreign countries and representatives of other states and colonies, and the one still living ex-Speaker, Lord Ullswater.

I could not help recollecting how, at the ceremony at Burford

Priory mentioned above, FitzRoy told me that he believed only one Speaker had ever died in office, and that he, FitzRoy, had been and seen where he was buried in a country church (I think in Kent) and that there was a monument to his memory in the church on which there was a reproduction of the 'House of Commons' Mace.

Like every other man in a high position, FitzRoy no doubt had his human shortcomings and made mistakes : I do not propose to refer to them or to any criticism of him : his highly efficient performance of his duties and his great services to Parliament and the country should be recorded for the benefit of and as an example to his successors. Any failings or mistakes may well be forgotten, and are far outweighed by his great and distinguished services to the country and the House of Commons.

Few will dissent from the view that he was a really great Speaker : he held office through a period in which some of the Speaker's duties were of more than usual importance, and others were of more than usual difficulty : in the former he upheld the highest traditions of his office and in the latter he dealt with and solved the difficulties in a manner in which few men could have done as well as he did.

In course of the twelve years in which I was so closely associated with him, I grew to be very fond of him and it is no mere formal tribute, but a recording of a real fact when I say that my admiration and respect for him, both as a personal friend and as Speaker of the House of Commons, were very great. Those feelings are I think common to all who had the good fortune to work with him. His death was a great grief to me.

There has been no instance in modern times of a Speaker once elected not being re-elected Speaker in succeeding Parliaments, if he were willing to serve again. Gully was first elected Speaker only after a division in which he defeated another nominee, and the opposition to Whitley on his first election has already been described : but yet both Gully and Whitley were unanimously re-elected in the subsequent Parliaments. It has also been a long-established convention that the Speaker's re-election as a member of the House should not be opposed in his constituency. But on the advent into the House of the Labour Party, they did not regard these conventions as binding upon them.

At the General Election of 1929 and of 1931, FitzRoy was re-elected unopposed for his old constituency, although there had been talk of a Labour opponent being put up against him : when

in 1929 the Labour Party obtained a majority in the new House, a section of that party desired to oppose FitzRoy's re-election, and to elect one of their own party as Speaker, but they were overborne in their own party and FitzRoy was re-elected without opposition, as he was again after the General Elections of 1931 and 1935.

But in the General Election of 1935 he was opposed in his constituency by a Labour candidate. FitzRoy took no part at all in the election contest. He addressed a meeting of electors of the Daventry Division in the Town Hall at Northampton when they adopted him as their candidate: he then explained his position and said that he would take no part in the election campaign. But he refused to make any other speech in the division, and in fact kept out of the division until the Polling Day, but he attended the counting of the votes, which gave him a substantial majority. The seat was by no means one which could be regarded as a "safe Conservative seat," and he probably owed his majority mainly to the fact of his being Speaker, and to a feeling that as Speaker his re-election ought not to be contested.

It is awkward enough as I know for a Chairman or Deputy Chairman to have to fight a contested election. But it is far worse for a Speaker. In fact, it would be quite incompatible with the position of a Speaker to fight a contested election on party lines, and FitzRoy took the only proper course open to him in not taking any active part in the contest.

Reasons against a Speaker being opposed in his constituency go far deeper than any considerations personal to the man himself. It is contrary to the best interests of the House of Commons, of the people, and of the good government of the people, to place in the position of a political partisan a man whom they require and expect to be strictly a non-party member.

Anyone who has any doubt on this subject should consider for a moment what he or she would think if the Speaker during a Parliamentary recess were to take an active part in some contested by-election for the House of Commons: if that be wrong, it is surely wrong to put the Speaker in the position of having to be a candidate in a contested election.

Anyone who has ever been a member of the House of Commons must have realized that the Speaker not only must in fact be an impartial and non-party member, but that the House and all its members should do their best to establish and uphold his reputation to that effect.

Many important and valued liberties and rights of individual subjects from the highest to the lowest in the land are protected by, and cannot well be better protected than by, long-established traditions such as this, and the destruction or abandonment of one of such traditions would inevitably be conducive to the abandonment or destruction of others.

It is surely undesirable and derogatory to the dignity of the House of Commons that a single constituency should exercise a veto upon the right of the House to continue a Speaker elected by the House in that office.

The difficulties likely to arise from the Speaker's re-election in his constituency being opposed have been the subject of much consideration by members and by other persons interested in questions of this nature: suggestions for avoiding these difficulties have been made, such as the creation of an official constituency with no constituents, to be called that of "the Palace of Westminster," to which the Speaker should succeed automatically on becoming Speaker, and which he should automatically vacate upon ceasing to be Speaker: but there would be considerable inconvenience and difficulty about any scheme of this kind, and the peculiarly British method of observing an agreed traditional custom that the Speaker should be re-elected without opposition has many advantages, over any artificial scheme of this kind, one being the support which it gives to the tradition of the Speaker's removal from all party ties, and to his traditional impartiality.

FitzRoy, who often discussed this matter with me, felt very strongly on the subject. It is, I believe, no secret that sooner than run the risk of being again opposed at the next General Election he proposed to retire in 1939 before the Parliament elected in 1935 came to an end as (had its life not been prolonged by reason of the War) would probably have happened before the end of the year 1939, or very soon after. This would under the circumstances at the time have been very unfortunate for the House and for the country. It was only with difficulty and on account of the position of affairs that he was dissuaded from doing so.

It is much to be hoped that the leaders of all the political parties will get together and agree to do their best to continue the old tradition. Feeling is, I believe, so strong on the subject that no candidate would be very likely to succeed in defeating the Speaker, and any party which supported such

an opposing candidate would undoubtedly suffer from doing so.

Shortly after FitzRoy's election as Speaker, I was elected Deputy Chairman in his place under James Hope, who continued in the office of Chairman. I was again an ordinary private member of the House during the time the Labour Government of 1929 was in office, as the Labour Party in that Parliament decided that both the Chairmanship and the Deputy Chairmanship should be held by members of their own party, and procured the election of Sir Robert Young and Mr. Dunnico as Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. But when those two resigned, as will be mentioned later, in September 1931, I became Chairman. Thus, with the exception of the period of the Labour Government of 1929, I was from June 1928 no longer an ordinary private member of the House. This, therefore, may be a convenient place in which to deal with the offices of Chairman and Deputy Chairman which I held.

CHAPTER IX

MY APPOINTMENT AS CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY SPEAKER.

DUTIES AND INCIDENTS OF THE OFFICE

THE election of FitzRoy as Speaker in June 1928 caused a vacancy in the post of Deputy Chairman: the Prime Minister (Baldwin), largely I believe on the recommendation of the Chairman, James Hope, proposed me for the post, and I was duly elected thereto. After the General Election of June 1929, when the second Labour Government was formed, the Labour Party determined to appoint members of their own party to be Chairman and Deputy Chairman, and I again became a private member: but when Sir Robert Young and Mr. Dunnico resigned office as Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively in September 1931, I became Chairman and was re-elected to that office after every subsequent General Election until I resigned in January 1943.

As Deputy Chairman, under James Hope, for twelve months, I had the great advantage of learning the duties of the office from him: in that subordinate post I do not remember any unusual experience or incident worth recording here, except the arrangements made for my duties to be carried out during my temporary absence, which are described in another chapter, where I refer to my visit to India in the Christmas recess of 1928. But I ought perhaps to record that early in 1929 I was made a K.B.E. in what should have been the New Year's Honours List which, owing to the King's illness, was not issued until March.

My first election as Chairman, on the formation of Ramsay MacDonald's first National Government in September 1931, will be described later when the Financial Crisis of that year is dealt with.

It may be well at this point to say something as to the office of Chairman, and his duties: those of the Deputy Chairman are similar.

The Chairman of Ways and Means, as he is usually officially styled, or as he is also called "the Chairman of Committees," is many other things besides Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means: he is Chairman of the Committee of Supply,

which, with the Committee of Ways and Means, are the only two Committees of the whole House which continue in existence through the whole of each Session : he is Chairman of all other Committees of the whole House, the chief of which are the Committees on the various Bills referred to Committees of the whole House, and he is also automatically Deputy Speaker under the Deputy Speaker Act 1855.

The Chairman has another very important branch of work : he is specially charged with the duty of looking after Private Bill legislation. I believe, historically first in point of time, his duty in this matter was to watch and guard the interests of Parliament, and of the country as represented by Parliament, and to see that Private Bills did not contain anything objectionable to Parliament or contrary to the customs and traditions of the House of Commons or incompatible with public interests ; and, if they did so, to bring the fact to the notice of the House : then as Private Bills are introduced on petition by persons or corporate bodies outside the House, and as other private persons, individuals, and corporate bodies who are also outside the House have rights to petition against and to oppose these Private Bills, it is the business of the Chairman to take formal charge of the Bills ; equally he takes formal charge of the petitions against them : in other words he has to represent or take the place in the House of both promoters of and petitioners against the Bills, and to see that both sides get fair play. An important part of Parliament's work regarding Private Bills is of a judicial nature, carried out by Select Committees who hear Agents and Counsel on behalf of all parties, so this work is both considerable in volume and important in character : the Chairman has the assistance of a skilled member of the Bar, known as Counsel to Mr. Speaker, and of the staff of the Private Bill Office. He also has the services of one of the Clerks of the House specially told off to work for the Chairman, and of a whole-time lower-grade clerk who attends to the ordinary routine work of the office of the Chairman of Ways and Means.

What may be called " the Chair work " of the Chairman (i.e. his duties of presiding in the House, whether in the Committee Chair at the table or in " the Big Chair " as Deputy Speaker) is very similar to the Chair Work of the Speaker. In all, the time during which the Chairman (or his Deputy) presides in the House is by no means inconsiderable : in fact, it is often the case that during the Session as a whole the Chairman, or his Deputy,

presides for a longer time in the aggregate than does the Speaker, bearing in mind that even on "Speaker's days" the Chairman or his Deputy spend at least two and a half hours every day in the Speaker's chair when relieving him.

The Chairman is an officer of the House, and in no sense an officer or servant of the Government; like the Speaker, he is elected by the House, but according to custom he, as also the Deputy Chairman, is proposed by the Prime Minister and is usually therefore in fact selected by the Government, who endeavour to select a member who will be acceptable to other parties: he is elected directly a new Parliament meets for the first time, and holds office, unless he dies or retires throughout the duration of that Parliament, and is not affected by any change of Government. So far there has never been a case in which the member proposed by the Prime Minister has not been elected: when Sir Robert Young resigned the office of Chairman in September 1931 and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, proposed me as his successor, the Labour members who were opposing the newly formed Coalition Government and were in a resentful and angry mood, challenged the proposal and a division was called: but on the second call the division was not pressed and I was elected without a division. I was re-elected Chairman without opposition in both the following Parliaments before my resignation. In 1943, when I resigned, the Government on the 20th January proposed Colonel Douglas Clifton Brown, the Deputy Chairman, and Major J. Milner, Labour member for Central Leeds, as Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively, in one and the same motion: while every one welcomed the proposed appointment of Clifton Brown, there were some who were opposed to Milner becoming Deputy Chairman: those opposing Milner's appointment were thus placed in some difficulty: one of them, when Mr. Attlee as Deputy Prime Minister moved the Government's motion, moved the Previous Question, an old form of motion which if carried would have meant deferring consideration of the Government motion: after some debate, in which the opposition to Milner was clearly indicated, the member who had proposed the Previous Question was persuaded to withdraw it, and the Government motion was carried without a division. A few weeks later, on March the 9th, Clifton Brown became Speaker. The Government then, on 10th March, proposed Milner as Chairman and Charles Williams as Deputy Chairman, again in one motion: there was some talk of Milner being opposed

on this occasion : but the threatened opposition did not materialize, and the Government's motion for his appointment as Chairman and that of Williams as Deputy Chairman was agreed to without a division. Clearly the House has been alive to the fact that it is for them to elect the Chairman, but it is equally clear that they will always have, in practice, to accept the member proposed by the Government unless and until on some future occasion they are prepared to propose some other member whom the House will support against the nominee of the Government. A proposal which received much support at that time was that a Government motion for the appointment of a Chairman should be placed on the Order paper, thus giving notice as to whom they propose. Unless and until this is done, it seems unlikely that the House will in fact choose a Chairman other than the Government's nominee.

There has for many years been an accepted convention that the Chairman, like the Speaker, does not take part in debates or vote in the House, or indulge in party propaganda, but divests himself of all party ties while in office : but, unlike the case of the Speaker, there is no sort of convention or custom that the Chairman should not be opposed in his constituency when a General Election occurs, and therefore he is at least technically free to return to party politics as soon as Parliament is dissolved. In all these matters the Deputy Chairman also is in the same position.

From what has been said of the work and duties of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, it will be seen how essential it is that these two officers of the House should be free from party ties and take no part in party controversies. It is not quite so important as in the case of the Speaker, for their offices are far from being of the same dignity or importance as his. But in regard to their Chair work, which has become so large and so important, much the same considerations apply to them as to the Speaker.

Further, in the case of the Chairman, his position as Deputy Speaker must be remembered, as he may at any time (and fairly often is) acting Speaker sometimes for a considerable period. Although the Deputy Chairman, as Deputy to and able to take the place of the Chairman, is also a Deputy Speaker, this does not apply with quite the same force to him, as it can seldom happen that he has to be acting Speaker at any rate for longer than a day or two.

The position of a man who has been Chairman or Deputy Chairman is a rather difficult one when a General Election comes,

especially if he is expecting or hoping to be elected to the Chair again in the new Parliament. Indeed (so long as he is likely to be opposed at a General Election) the position may at any time make things difficult for him in his constituency if his seat is not a very safe one, owing to his being obliged to keep aloof from party controversy.

Directly Parliament is dissolved he is free from any restriction regarding party controversy: but having been debarred from anything of the kind for a year or more, it is far more difficult for him to fight a hotly contested election: even more is that the case if he hopes to go back to his old post in the House if he is re-elected: and indeed if he does get re-elected in the new Parliament as Chairman or Deputy Chairman, it is at least unfortunate, from the point of view of the House of Commons, that he should have had an interlude of three weeks or more in which he has been fighting a contested election on party lines. This sort of difficulty had been a constant source of trouble to my predecessor, James Hope, who sat for a constituency which was not regarded as very safe and really needed a good deal of "nursing" between elections. It was this experience, no doubt, which to some extent caused him, when I was his Deputy Chairman in 1928, to make a suggestion to me: that suggestion was that if I felt my seat was safe enough, it might be worth standing again on the basis of still refraining during the election from party controversy: the idea commended itself to me very much; I felt that I had a fairly strong position in the constituency which I had represented for some ten years, and in which I had successfully fought five contested elections, and that I was sufficiently safe to try such an experiment.

Therefore after consulting and obtaining the approval of Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party, I determined to try it. In my election address in the General Election of May 1929, after referring to my having been Deputy Chairman for about twelve months, and to my contemplating the possibility of being asked to be so again in the new Parliament, I said, "I am advised and believe that it will be in the best interests of Parliamentary Government that during this election I shall still refrain, as far as possible, from engaging in party controversy." I went on to explain that this limitation would apply to myself alone, and not to other supporters of the Conservative Party in the division, and said that I asked no concession from my opponents, except that they would respect my reasons for

adopting this course and not make it difficult for me to carry it out. I stated definitely, however, that I was a Conservative, and that if in the new Parliament I were to be free from the limitations of holding such an office, I should, as in the past, give active support to the Conservative Party.

This action on my part seemed to make my Liberal opponent very angry, though I never could make out why: my Socialist opponent, however, contented himself with the suggestion that it was a convenient way of avoiding the difficult task of defending the Conservative Party! The Press generally drew special attention to my attitude and expressed a variety of opinions about it: but I think it is true to say that generally speaking it was not condemned or unfavourably commented upon, except by papers advocating other than Conservative views.

I kept to the course I had proposed, and was again returned by a majority of over 6,000, although as will be remembered elections throughout the country went badly for the Conservative Party: whether I should have done better or not if I had not taken this unusual course I am not certain: my supporters in the constituency thought I should.

The next General Election was that of October 1931, when the Financial Crisis had led to a split in the Labour Party and the formation of a National Government, under Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, which included a number of Conservatives and some Liberals. I had been elected Chairman only a few weeks before the dissolution when Sir Robert Young, following a split in the Labour Party, resigned. Having regard to the circumstances of the election, I did not think it necessary to adopt any positive non-controversial attitude as I was a supporter of the National Government, comprising leaders of all three parties, and I fought the election against only one opponent, a Socialist opposed to the National Government, and won by a majority of over 24,000.

When the next General Election came at the end of 1935, and I had through the whole of the Parliament elected in 1931 been Chairman, I contented myself with the determination to conduct the campaign on the lines that so far as I myself was concerned, I would refrain from attacking or severely criticizing any opposing parties or party leaders, and content myself with advocating the cause of the party to which I belonged: in my election address, having referred to my having been Chairman in the last Parliament, and to not being able to foresee whether I should be so again or not, and having stated how the position of

Chairman had prevented my taking part in political controversy, I said, "I am now free to express my views, but in the interests of our parliamentary system I shall try to do so with moderation, and to advocate the cause of the Government rather than attack the Opposition."

The powers of the Chairman, like those of the Speaker, in keeping order in debate and calling members to speak, of selecting amendments, or motions, and of granting or refusing the Closure and other like matters, are very great: but this does not mean that he is in any position to influence decisions of the House according to his own personal wishes or opinions: practically all these powers have to be exercised according to certain principles and rules established by custom and precedent and well known to the clerks of the House, who advise him if he asks them to do so: the Speaker or Chairman is not bound strictly to follow precedents, and will not follow precedents which he thinks wrong or not in harmony with the spirit of governing principles: incidentally it should be stated here that in Committee the Chairman's decisions are final and are not subject to any right of appeal to the Speaker. A member may quite properly endeavour, so far as the Chairman will permit, respectfully to express a contrary opinion to that of the Chairman, with a view to persuading him to alter his decision: but only the House itself, on a motion placed on the Order Paper, has a right to find fault with the conduct of the Chairman. The restrictions on the Chairman's exercise of his powers will be best understood by bearing in mind the true position of the Chairman and the source of his powers: the House has absolute sovereign powers regarding its own rights and methods of procedure, and the Chairman has not (nor has the Speaker) any superior authority or rights of his own over the sovereign power of the House: but it would not be practicable for the House to carry on its deliberative or legislative functions except under certain rules and customs, and with some presiding member of its own body charged with the duty of seeing that such rules and customs are observed. This particular member, therefore, whether he be Speaker or Chairman, should remember that the powers he has are powers of the House, which the House in its wisdom authorizes him to exercise on behalf of the House: they must therefore be exercised by the member in question (Speaker or Chairman) in accordance with what he believes to be the true will and ancient traditions of the House: but it must be understood that what I call the

true will and ancient traditions of the House is not by any means the same thing as the wishes at any given moment of a majority of the members of the House: "the true will of the House" in these matters means the true will of a great and ancient corporate body which may be far different from the momentary will of a majority of the members, or indeed of all the members at any particular moment of time. The House of Commons is far from being a mere collection of some 600 individuals: they are individuals who hold a special trustee-like position as the successors for the time being of a long succession of members of a body which has come into existence, developed and progressed, and established traditional rules and customs, through many generations of members. The House on its part in appointing a Speaker or Chairman admits by implication its corporate nature, which I have endeavoured to describe, and its duty to support occupants of the Chair against all complaints or criticisms so long as it believes that the occupant in question has acted conscientiously and rightly according to the best of his understanding and ability.

When the Deputy Speaker acts as Speaker for a whole day's sitting, he enters the House from behind the Chair: the Mace being carried in to the House by the Serjeant-at-Arms accompanied by the Chaplain in the usual way, a messenger announcing in the House "Mace" instead of "Mr. Speaker": the Deputy Speaker in evening dress starts from the back door of his room (near the principal entrance to the Library), and followed by his Clerk, marches slowly along the Speaker's corridor and thus to the entrance behind the Chair. The procession, with the Mace, starts at the same moment from the Speaker's office, thus meeting the Deputy Speaker half-way along the corridor: the Speaker's Secretary waits at the door of the Speaker's office where he follows the Deputy Speaker to the House: thus the Mace and the Deputy Speaker arrive in the House at approximately the same moment: the Mace being placed on the Table, the Clerk of the House announces "the unavoidable absence of Mr. Speaker from this day's sitting of the House": the Deputy Speaker then advances to the Table for prayers and the sitting proceeds in the ordinary way.

While I was acting Speaker for several weeks, during the Speaker's rather long illness in the spring of 1941, I had considerable experience of Speaker's work outside the Chamber: among other things I had to deal with arrangements for fire-

watching at the Houses of Parliament ; in that connection I had, as representing the House of Commons, to attend meetings at which my old Wadham friend, the Lord Chancellor Simon, was present as Speaker of the House of Lords to represent that House.

Captain Bourne was elected Deputy Chairman in 1931, just after I was elected Chairman.

As had been the case with me, before I became Deputy Chairman in 1928, Bourne had for some time been on the Panel of Temporary Chairmen, and considerable use had been made of his services in this capacity, so that it was no surprise to the House when he was proposed as Deputy Chairman. Incidentally, it was he who had been appointed to act temporarily as Deputy Chairman (in December 1928) in my place if, as happened, I should be unable to be present, which meant if I did not get back from a voyage to India in time for the meeting of the House.

No Chairman could have wanted a better Deputy or Assistant : Bourne was in many ways a rather remarkable man. After leaving Oxford he was called to the Bar, just before the War broke out in 1914 : he served through that war and was wounded and rather badly gassed, with the result that when the War was over he was advised by his doctors that he must live quietly in the country and not take up any profession or business in London, and he therefore settled down to farm in Herefordshire : but his health soon improved to such an extent that he became Member of Parliament for the City of Oxford in 1924 and a regular attendant at the House. When he set his heart on achieving some particular object, he devoted himself to doing so with remarkable persistence : when he went to Eton he stated (as if there was no doubt about his ability to do it) that he was going to stroke the Eton boat, and afterwards to stroke the Oxford boat : I believe he was rather laughed at by some of his companions, but he devoted himself to doing so and became stroke of the Eton boat, and also stroke of the Oxford Eight for three successive years, in which he led his crew to victory : moreover, he became an acknowledged authority on rowing and on questions of different styles of rowing.

In a similar way, when he came into the House of Commons he declared with equal assurance that he intended to become Speaker of the House of Commons.

He worked hard in studying Erskine May, and other authorities on procedure and precedents. Whenever I was faced with a difficult problem or had to decide some doubtful question,

Bourne's assistance was of the greatest value: he would very quickly look up all the authorities and precedents. I did not always agree with his judgment or come to the same conclusions as he did: it may be that on at least some of these occasions he was right and I was wrong, but in any event the way in which he helped me was of the greatest use, and he never attempted to oppose my decisions: he thoroughly enjoyed the Deputy Chairman's work, and seemed to have almost a passion for sitting in the Chair, which was somewhat surprising to anyone who had been accustomed to having to do this frequently. He did his duty in the Chair effectively and satisfactorily, though he had some rather unfortunate physical disadvantages and characteristics: he had a bad voice and had little or no natural appearance of dignity: his somewhat brusque manner led to his being nicknamed by some members "the Sergeant-Major." But everyone appreciated his many good qualities and his efficiency and he was generally popular among the members and made many close and intimate friends.

His sudden end, when he fell dead while taking a walk on a Sunday afternoon in Scotland in September 1938, was a great blow to me, and indeed was a matter of sincere regret to the whole House.

Directly Parliament met again after his death the question of a successor to him had to be considered. As mentioned elsewhere, the Deputy Chairman is elected by the House but by custom is proposed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister not unnaturally consults a number of leading members of all parties in the House, and especially (if that office is not also vacant) the Chairman, on whose suggestion or advice he usually acts. The Government Whips, therefore, were soon in consultation with me on the subject. The members of the Panel of Temporary Chairmen naturally suggested themselves for consideration as having had experience not only of taking the Chair in Committee on the Floor of the House, but also of acting as Chairman of a Standing Committee.

As I, while Chairman, was never a member of or present at the proceedings of a Standing Committee, I had to obtain the opinions of others as to the success or otherwise of members of the Panel in their duties as Chairmen of Standing Committees. The Government Whips and myself found that there were a number of objections of various kinds to all of those who had been for any appreciable time on the Panel of Temporary Chairmen,

so we had to try and think of someone else. We had great difficulty in finding any member who seemed to us obviously fitted for the post and likely to be willing to accept it. The Speaker, the Chief Whip and myself all went carefully through the whole list of members to try and find someone suitable, without much success. One member who had only just recently been placed by the Speaker on the Panel of Temporary Chairmen, Colonel Douglas Clifton Brown, never seems to have occurred to anybody, probably owing to his having been so recently placed on the Panel. He had been a member of the House of Commons, with a short break of about four months in 1924, ever since 1918. He was a quiet and unobtrusive but hard-working member; he had, I believe, never acted as Chairman on a Standing Committee, or any other committee of a similar kind; he had only once done a turn of duty in the Committee Chair of the House as a Temporary Chairman, but on that particular occasion it was rather late at night in course of a late sitting, and he had on his first experience a troublesome, or as it was sometimes called, a "sticky" time: the House was not in the best of tempers, and he had to handle a somewhat difficult situation. It had always been my practice when a new Temporary Chairman was doing duty in the Chair to try, as far as possible, to keep an eye upon him, both with a view to assisting him in case of need, and in order to form an opinion as to his success or otherwise in the Chair: consequently I happened to be standing behind the Speaker's Chair at the time when Clifton Brown had to deal with that difficult situation, and was pleased with the way he had handled it. He had been well known to me personally ever since we both first got into the House in 1918: I knew his general character and ability, and his conduct in the Committee Chair on the occasion I have referred to had considerably impressed me. Consequently I suggested his name to the Chief Whip and others who were considering the question: my suggestion surprised them, but as we came to talk the matter over, they came to see that I had good reasons for my suggestion, and ultimately the Chief Whip said he would submit Clifton Brown's name to the Prime Minister, as my choice. A few nights afterwards, the Chief Whip, shortly after 10 p.m., told me that the Prime Minister had agreed to my suggestion and was willing to propose Clifton Brown, if he were prepared to accept the post. Talking to me when he was first told of it, Clifton Brown said he should have a lot to learn and probably find it hard work at first and should look to me to help him: then he made a

remark which struck me very much as showing some knowledge of what was required : " Anyhow, I have got one advantage, the House will never frighten me."

When it became known that he was to be proposed as Deputy Chairman, as he was the following day and unanimously elected, it came quite as a surprise to the majority of members ; but there were few, if any, who expressed any feeling that he was unsuitable for the post ; in fact he very soon made himself well acquainted with his duties and I found him an excellent Deputy and assistant, as well as an extremely agreeable person to work with.

How five years later, with the unanimous approval of the House, he succeeded me as Chairman when I resigned, and how only a few weeks after that, on the unexpected death of Speaker FitzRoy, he became Speaker of the House of Commons, is well known.

Several years after I first became Chairman, I had a troublesome incident to deal with in connection with Private Bills. A well-known K.C., a leading member of the Parliamentary Bar, after the House rose one Friday afternoon, told me that he was appearing for one of several petitioners against a Private Bill ; the Chairman of the Committee having heard counsel for the promoters of the Bill, without calling upon any of the petitioners against it, had declared that the Committee did not desire to hear counsel for the petitioners as they had made up their minds that the promoters had proved their case. To do this without hearing any of the other side at all was astonishingly improper, and contrary to all ideas of judicial fairness and propriety. I asked the K.C. to tell me exactly what had happened. I knew him well, and that I could rely absolutely on what he told me, and therefore I was able to decide at once on the action to be taken. There was only one thing to be done, the proceedings of the Committee must be declared void and the whole case of the Bill must be re-heard before another Committee : as this would involve obtaining a resolution of the House, I thought it necessary to inform the Speaker, who, I knew, was starting off by car at once for his house in the country : I ran across to his house and just caught him as he was about to start. I explained the matter briefly to him and told him what I proposed to do (with which he fully agreed). Then I made some further discreet enquiries : I was not surprised to find that the conduct of the Committee and its Chairman had created astonishment and consternation among both members of the Parliamentary Bar and Parliamentary

Agents (most of whom, however, to do them justice, expected some remedial action would be taken). It was clear that Private Bill Committees which were usually well regarded in legal circles would be completely discredited unless the matter were promptly dealt with. I therefore took steps privately to let it be known among people concerned what was going to be done. Consequently such excitement as had been aroused was soon allayed, and further open talk on the subject was prevented. I wrote to the Chairman of the Committee and asked him to come and see me as soon as he reached the House on the following Monday morning. I knew him well and my interview with him was rather a delicate matter. He was an old and generally respected member, and I did not want to make things more unpleasant for him than I could help. I told him of the complaint which had been made to me, and that he and his Committee had made a slip which would have to be rectified. He at once admitted this: I told him that the proceedings of his Committee must be declared void and the Bill referred to another Committee, which would entail a resolution of the House: I said I would try to obtain this with as little publicity or fuss as possible. I accordingly placed on the Order Paper for the next day the necessary motion to be moved by the Chairman of Ways and Means when private business was taken at the beginning of the sitting. In the time allowed for private business at the beginning of the sitting, the resolution could be passed (after a short explanation by me if asked for) if no member objected; but if any debate were to arise it would have to be postponed and put down for discussion, which of course was the last thing that I wished. When the time came, I formally moved the motion: on a request by a member, I made a very brief and vague statement to the effect that the Committee had made a slip in procedure which in my opinion could only be remedied by a re-hearing before another Committee and asked the House to pass the necessary resolution on my recommendation. The member had asked for further information as to the mistake, and as to who was responsible for the waste of time and additional expense to the parties which would be caused: he appeared to be satisfied with my opinion that it was due to one of those mistakes which anybody might make in an unguarded moment, that the additional expense would not be great, and that any further discussion was to be deprecated as unnecessary and undesirable. Fortunately he did not press the matter, and the House agreed to my motion.

CHAPTER X

THE PARLIAMENT OF 1923 AND THE MATRIMONIAL CAUSES BILL 1923

THE Coalition Parliament of 1918-22, having come to an end with the break-up of the Coalition, and was followed by the short Parliament of 1923 and by the Parliament of 1924 under the first Labour Government: thus we had three General Elections within a period of about two years, those of November 1922, December 1923 and November 1924, a heavy tax upon a poor member who paid his own election expenses. But the member for the Watford Division was a lucky man! After the election of 1924 my constituents having collected a fund for the purpose repaid me my election expenses, approximately £750. This was an immense material boon to me, but it was also a real compliment which I appreciated highly.

Coming back to the House of Commons as a member of the 1923 Parliament I was no longer a new member.

I had still much to learn, and many more mistakes to make, but at least I had come to love the House of Commons, and my constituents too.

Foreign affairs took up much—perhaps too much—of the time of the new Parliament: that was a branch of politics of which I knew even less than I did about some others: I have suggested that perhaps too much time was taken up by foreign affairs, because subsequent experience has made me realize that this above everything else is a subject on which the House as a whole can seldom have complete knowledge until after the event. I therefore confined my work in such debates more to listening than to acting: but there were plenty of opportunities for activity in other directions. Early in the session my attention was drawn to a Private Member's Bill dealing with Divorce, a Bill which my legal experience led me to believe would greatly facilitate easy and collusive divorce, and I made up my mind to oppose it to the best of my ability. I soon found that I should have but little support: this however did not deter me; but my action brought me "a peck o' trouble" which was in some ways as agreeable to me as it was unexpected. It at least was a useful and interesting experience to me, and in the hope that it may be so to others I tell the story.

The Matrimonial Causes Bill 1923 was a short and simple Bill designed to give to a wife the right to divorce her husband for a single act of adultery. It was introduced as a private member's Bill, by Major Entwistle (now Sir Cyril Entwistle, K.C.). The law relating to divorce was then very chaotic and undoubtedly unfair to the wife: she could not obtain a divorce from her husband on account of his adultery alone, however flagrant or habitual it might be: to obtain a divorce in such a case she had also to prove cruelty or desertion. But opposition to this single but drastic alteration in the law was based on the fact that it would make divorce (and particularly collusive divorce) much easier without in any way dealing with other serious defects in the Marriage Laws.

The subject of Divorce Law Reform had for many years been the subject of much consideration and discussion—and incidentally of much heated controversy. A Royal Commission set up to enquire into the subject had reported in 1912: a lengthy Bill (commonly called the Buckmaster Bill) had been introduced in the House of Lords about a year before this Bill of 1923, but its proposals were so drastic, and roused so much opposition in many quarters and for so many reasons, that it never had much prospect of success. The House of Commons had, by a large majority, passed a Resolution against the Bill.

Some ten years after this Entwistle Bill became law, far more extensive alterations were made in the Divorce Laws by another private member's Bill sponsored by my friend and namesake A. P. Herbert. That Bill is no doubt a more interesting subject, but I do not propose to compete with the full and entertaining account of it which he has himself given in his book *The Ayes have it*. I write of this Entwistle Bill because I was specially concerned with opposing it and moved the rejection of it on second reading, and because it was the occasion of an amusing campaign being commenced against me personally, in my constituency and elsewhere, by a group of women unconnected with my constituency.

The Bill came up for second reading on Friday the 2nd of March, 1923. It was clear to me, long before that date, that an attempt to defeat the second reading had not the remotest chance of success: none the less, I thought that a protest should be made against a measure which was bound to bring about easy divorce, and which I, as a practising lawyer, knew must increase collusive divorce: I therefore put down a motion for rejection which I

moved in due course immediately after the second reading had been moved by Major Entwistle and seconded by Mr. Foot.

Although nearly the whole House was against me, I got a good hearing and was not subjected to any interruptions except from a few members who interrupted me somewhat angrily and excitedly at one point: I was arguing that the Bill if passed, would result in an increase of collusive divorce proceedings: I stated that it would lead to admissions by men who wanted divorce, that they had been guilty of an act of adultery, because the sin of adultery does not ruin the reputation of a man in the way that it ruins the reputation of a woman, and has not equally serious results. In the course of my argument, I repeated more than once "whatever should be, and whether you like it or not, the fact is that misconduct on the part of a man has not the same result as in the case of a woman," and I challenged anyone in the House to deny it, expressly disclaiming any intention of advocating a lower standard of morality for men than for women. No one attempted in the debate to deny the truth of this. None the less, the women who afterwards attacked me, repeatedly accused me of having argued that adultery by a man was of little or no moment. Apart from these interruptions, the debate was orderly and of a high standard throughout, and no one in the House suggested that I had said anything which was in the nature of encouraging any lower standard of morality.

At that time there were two women members of the House, but I believe no more: I do not think either of them was present during the debate: certainly no woman member took part in the debate or voted in the division. Several excellent speeches in support of my opposition were made, notably one by Mr. J. F. P. Rawlinson, K.C., the very respected member for Cambridge University, and another by Sir Sydney Russell-Wells, the eminent medical man, who then represented the University of London. Indeed, I should say that so far as the actual debate was concerned, a better case was made against the Bill than for it: but members had made up their minds to vote for the Bill, and the second reading was carried by a very big majority, 231 to 27. Before the debate closed, the Home Secretary, Mr. Bridgeman, stated the attitude of the Government, that they would not oppose the second reading: but he made this reservation to the effect that the Government accepted the declaration that the promoters of the Bill did not intend to make it go any further and that if in Committee or in the other House any extensions

of the Bill beyond ones of the most modest kind were attempted, he could not answer for the Government not deciding to oppose it, and that (in such a case) he should certainly oppose it himself. Although he himself voted for the second reading, members of the Government (with a few exceptions) refrained from voting.

The Bill then went to a Standing Committee for the Committee stage. I moved an amendment to restrict the wife's right to divorce her husband for adultery alone, to "habitual" adultery, instead of a single act of adultery, which of course was also defeated by a large majority on a division. Mr. Rawlinson moved a new clause to provide that a divorced spouse should not be permitted to marry again until twelve months after the decree absolute, which was negatived without a division. I attempted to move a new clause, making "incurable insanity" a ground for divorce, after the insane person had been confined under the lunacy laws for five years: but the Chairman, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, ruled it out of order as "an extension of the purpose of the Bill, which is strictly limited by Clause 1." On the proposal of the Solicitor-General, Clause 3, a badly drawn clause, purporting to provide for what should happen on a decree nisi being pronounced under the Bill, was negatived, without anything being inserted in place of it, the Solicitor-General explaining that, as was undoubtedly true, it would cause doubts and litigation.

When the Bill again came before the House on Report, a large number of amendments had been put down, by various other members as well as myself: as I doubted the correctness of the Chairman's ruling in Committee under which he had ruled out of order a new clause of which I had given notice, I put the same down for the Report stage, but the Speaker took the same view as the Chairman, which led to Lord Hugh Cecil asking the Speaker to inform the House what amendments he regarded as in, or not in order, and the Speaker in reply ruled a number of amendments out of order. I had also put down and moved a motion for re-committal of the Bill (i.e. sending back again to Committee) mainly on grounds connected with the striking out of Clause 3, above referred to. This was, not unnaturally, defeated by a large majority, as no doubt had it been carried it would have meant the loss of the Bill because the necessary time would not have been available.

I did, however, succeed, after lengthy debate, in getting so much support for a useful amendment that in the end the promoters of the Bill agreed to accept it, and it was carried without

a division: it was to prevent the Bill being retrospective and permitting a wife to obtain a divorce under the Bill on account of an act of adultery committed before the passing of the Bill. Other amendments were defeated on divisions, except one moved by Entwistle himself, which was agreed to, until a little before 3 p.m., when the Speaker announced that he would not accept any more amendments. The third reading was debated for the remainder of the time, when the Closure was moved and carried, as was the third reading, by large majorities. It was afterwards passed by the House of Lords, also by a large majority, after a debate in which Lord Birkenhead severely criticized the form of the Bill from a legal point of view, but supported its passing.

In considering this Bill and the proceedings thereon, it is well to bear in mind the peculiar "atmosphere" in the House of Commons and indeed outside it throughout the country, in regard to many social questions and kindred matters. It was less than five years since the vote had been given to women and since the Armistice of November 1918 brought about the end of the War: the hopeful and idealistic belief in the new and rapid creation of a better world was still the ruling factor in many minds: people were told that the advent of women into politics was going to improve both standards and methods of political life. In the constituencies women were still a rather unknown quantity: many clever and able women, with their newly acquired privileges, tried to persuade their followers that women were above parties, and they talked much of "women's questions"; they appeared to consider that many subjects were ones on which women should have the chief, if not the only say, and tended, whether they meant it or not, to form a women's party. All this was perhaps inevitable at the time; the fault did not lie entirely with the women: many men were still strongly opposed to women having the vote, and often, sometimes through a perverted sense of chivalry to women, were not helpful to these newcomers into political life: moreover—and perhaps this was one of the worst features—most members and candidates for Parliament were afraid of the women and laid themselves out far too much to catch the women's votes. That is my personal view of the position at that time. Though I was not an enthusiastic advocate of "votes for women" partly because of the methods adopted by the suffragette campaigners, I never believed that in this country it would have any disastrous results. Over twenty years have passed since then and few people I think now seriously regret that women have been

enfranchised : in that time women, as well as men, have changed their methods and modified their views : they have learnt some of the difficulties and have experienced some of the disappointments which are inevitable in politics. My personal experience goes far to confirm this view : in 1923, not only were my statements and speeches in Parliament and elsewhere misquoted and distorted, but I was held up to the public as a teacher of immorality, a corrupter of the young and a sort of natural enemy of women : yet subsequent general elections and events in the Watford Division have proved beyond doubt that my actions at this period neither cost me votes nor interfered with the confidence or respect with which my constituency was good enough to regard me. Indeed, the attack which was made upon me, was engineered and mainly supported from outside the constituency : the few ladies and fewer men in my constituency who took any active part in it appear to have long ago forgiven me or forgotten all about it. So, although I see no reason to, and do not, regret the course I took, and have not changed my views, I prefer to put out of my mind entirely the names of constituents who took part in the attack : it may well be that some of them, seeing the immense increase in divorces which resulted from the Bill becoming law, now feel that my opposition to the Bill was justified. The campaign against me was organized and undertaken by a group who called themselves the "Six Point Group" with the backing of that well-known but at that time rather violent and intemperate weekly paper *Time and Tide*. Very soon after the Bill had passed these women opened a committee-room in the Watford Division and sent down a staff to work against me and continued their campaign until the end of the General Election, which took place in the following December : they organized a big protest meeting in Watford, which I attended myself, as did many of my friends and supporters, so it was a lively meeting : they held similar but smaller meetings in other places in the neighbourhood, and they employed sandwich-board men to parade the streets with posters advocating turning me out of the House of Commons and so on, advertising themselves on those posters as the "Six Point Group"; but people in the division called them the "Wild Women" and amused themselves by obliterating the "o" in the word "Point" on the posters. Those ladies who took a prominent part in the campaign included the late Viscountess Rhondda, widow of the first Lord Rhondda, Miss Vera Brittain, and Miss Winifred Mayo. Miss Vera Brittain

referred at some length to this campaign in her book *Testament of Youth*, quite a good and interesting book of its kind, and I am bound to say that I regarded her references to myself in it as (though not so intended) very complimentary. As usual in the latter part of the summer I held and spoke at a number of public Conservative Party meetings, and I replied to the attacks upon me at those meetings: I also drew up a brief memorandum of my defence, which I circulated in the division and published in the local papers. So we had quite a lively time which I rather enjoyed, for it soon became obvious that the Six Point Group did not get much support: when the election came, their failure was complete, as I was re-elected by a majority of 3,001, only some 470 less than my previous majority, although, as will be remembered, the elections throughout the country went heavily against the Conservative Party.

Meanwhile *Time and Tide* had continuously published rather intemperate and violent attacks upon me: they honoured me by placing me No. 1 (all by myself in their first class) in their Black List of M.P.s, even placing me above Sir Frederick Banbury who, up to that time, had been their pet aversion.

Had I been a litigious-minded person I might no doubt have found grounds for commencing an action for libel or slander: indeed a day or two before polling day in December, the Six Point Group, as such, published some leaflet which was definitely libellous in my opinion, and seemed therefore to give me some ground for threatening an action. I instructed my solicitors to write to the Group, asking for the names of the officials of the Group, in order that they might insert them correctly in a writ they proposed to issue on my behalf: my solicitors wrote the letter and sent it to the office of the Group by a clerk, who was instructed to wait for a reply: the Secretary (or some representative speaking on behalf of the Group) got through to me on the telephone and a rather amusing conversation took place: she read some sort of laboured explanation of the offending leaflet and wanted me to say I would be satisfied by their publishing it. I refused to say anything beyond referring them to my solicitors: this appeared to annoy them and after several unsuccessful attempts to get me into a discussion they gave it up. So far as I was concerned that ended the incident.

I knew how undesirable it usually is for a Member of Parliament to start an action of this kind, and moreover it was only about two days before the poll, as to the result of which I had

little doubt, and I was quite satisfied with having apparently given them something of a fright.

I understood at the time that one of the instigators of the campaign (though I believe she never came into the constituency) was Lady Astor, who I suppose has also forgiven me, as she has now for many years apparently regarded me as a friend : but in 1923 our only acquaintance was as fellow-members of the House, where we fairly often disagreed, and no doubt I had often succumbed to the temptation of "ragging" her ; and I am not surprised that she regarded me as "an awful man." Not long after the General Election of 1923, my wife and I and Lady Astor were present at a reception given by the Speaker : another M.P. who was a great friend of mine, and who also knew Lady Astor well and often quarrelled with her on political questions, thought it would be fun to introduce my wife to her and did so, explaining to her that she was my wife. Lady Astor exclaimed, "What, are you the wife of that awful man ? How long have you been married ?"—"About twenty years," said my wife. "And you've put up with him all that time ! But there ——" (mentioning a lady friend of hers who had known me for a long time) "tells me he really is quite a good fellow in private life." Perhaps therefore among the many good services my wife has rendered to me, may be the starting of friendly relations between Lady Astor and myself.

Lady Astor was, of course, a notable member of the House of Commons—not merely because she was the first woman to take her seat as a member of the House, but because of what she was and what she had done. Notwithstanding (perhaps even to some extent because of) her very human little weaknesses, she was generally popular in the House and universally respected for her many great and good characteristics : she was an outstanding example of how an honest and outspoken member with strongly held opinions can yet be on friendly terms with those who differ from her on political questions. Her passages of arms with other members and her interruptions in their speeches often brightened dull debates and amused the House : but they were sometimes rather troublesome to the occupant of the Chair, as was her difficulty in her speeches of avoiding irrelevant matters ; but in many cases, "and certainly in hers, it has not been difficult to forgive these offences, as she certainly does her best to treat the Chair with proper respect, and to obey the rulings of the Chair, even when she finds it difficult. She and the late Speaker

FitzRoy were great personal friends : once when he was one of her many guests at a luncheon in her house, she said to him in the hearing of the whole company, " Mr. Speaker, I always wonder how you can stand your job, having to sit for hours listening to all those speeches : haven't you often wished you were dead ? "—" No," said he, " not yet, but I've often wished you were ! " This raised a general laugh, in which she joined as heartily as the rest of the company. When someone told me the story, I said, " Well, if she had made the same remark to me, I don't think I could have avoided making the same reply ! "

The Conservative Government of 1923 under the Premiership of Bonar Law, and, after his resignation, of Baldwin, with a substantial majority over all the rest of the House of Commons, looked likely to continue for the normal full period of about four years. It was, however, beset with difficulties from the start. Britain and France found themselves at variance on the question of German reparations. Three members of the Government had failed to get in at the General Election, Sir A. Stanley, Sir Arthur Griffith Boscawen, and Mr. John Hills : what were supposed to be safe Conservative seats were then found for them, but all of them were again defeated at the by-elections and ultimately had to resign their posts. The loss of these three seats, and specially when the losers were members of the Government, was damaging to the prestige of the Government, and although suitable and competent members were easily found to occupy the posts which thus became vacant, all three of the defeated men were a loss to the party in the House.

Naturally the Opposition attributed these by-election results to the faults or failings of the Government : but probably this was quite erroneous : an unexpected by-election is proverbially a misleading guide to general feeling in the country : but in all these cases the result was almost certainly due to the candidate having little or no knowledge of, and being unknown to, the constituents, and to a general and growing dislike on the part of constituents to having a candidate imposed upon them, or being made use of to provide a seat for a defeated Minister : this feeling had grown greatly in recent years, partly, no doubt, as a result of the increased electorate.

Then on April 13th the Government suffered a peculiar defeat on a division. It was totally unexpected, and not of a nature to cause any suggestion of resignation, but again it was damaging to Government prestige. It was also a cause of some practical diffi-

culty and raised an awkward question of procedure. Under Standing Orders, the House resolves itself into Committee of Supply when Supply is first order of the day, automatically, with an exception which will be explained directly, and this has been the practice for many years. In earlier times, a motion to go into Committee of Supply was moved and was debatable : when Standing Orders were so altered as to put an end to these opportunities for debate, it was thought necessary to preserve such opportunities to a limited extent, with the result that on the occasions in every session of first going into Committee of Supply on estimates for each of the fighting services and for the Civil Services, a motion is moved and is debatable " that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair," and this is a recognized opportunity for a general debate on the administration of the services in question : but it had long been the established practice to pass the motion without a division when the debate comes to an end, as being merely a formal motion for general convenience of debate. On this occasion there had been a debate on a question relating to admission to the Civil Service of a class of ex-service men, usually known as the Lytton entrants : the Opposition naturally espoused the cause of these men as against the Government, and there was a certain amount of sympathy with the Opposition view among some of the Conservatives : when the question was put to the House, the Opposition unexpectedly challenged a division : many of the Government's supporters, not anticipating any division, had left the House, and when the figures were announced it was found that the motion that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair had been defeated. No one knew what would happen next, or what would be the precise result of such a division : the House under the circumstances could not go into Committee as had been intended, and was not ready to go on with any other business. For the moment, therefore, there was no course open but for the House to adjourn, which was done on the motion of the Prime Minister.

Then the Government and the experts on procedure had to consider what would be the result of the decision and how the apparent dead-lock could be overcome.

There is a strict rule that any motion or resolution which has once been defeated cannot be again proposed in the same session : so the matter could not be dealt with by proposing the motion again and carrying it, as no doubt the House would have been willing to do : it was argued that the word " now " in the motion

had the effect of the motion being a different motion if proposed on a different day : this may well be correct, but such a solution was frowned upon by the authorities, who, very properly, did not like doing something which might seem to weaken the rule against re-considering and altering in the same session a decision which had once disposed of a question.

The House had placed itself in a ridiculous position by a decision which in effect meant that the House would not continue to function. This ridiculous position was dealt with by an equally ridiculously simple method : the Speaker held that under the Standing Orders the motion that he do now leave the Chair had to be proposed and was debatable only on the first day of going into Committee of Supply, but that on every subsequent Supply day, the Speaker, under the Standing Orders, had to leave the Chair automatically without question put, as soon as the business of Committee of Supply was reached : so a day or two later Committee of Supply appeared on the daily order paper, and when it was reached, the Speaker left the Chair, and the House went into Committee.

The net result, therefore, of the defeat of the motion was that the House, after and in consequence of its absurd decision, did no more work for the rest of that day.

But the most serious blow to the Government was the enforced resignation, owing to bad health, of the Prime Minister, Mr. Bonar Law. On the break-up of the Coalition he had accepted the task of forming a Conservative Government, by reason of his strong sense of duty and his party's urgent wish that he should do so. He had at the time expressed the opinion that he would not be able to continue in office for more than a comparatively short time. When he returned to the House of Commons after the Easter Recess he was suffering from a relaxed throat, which practically prevented him from making any important or lengthy speech : he was advised to take a sea voyage and accordingly left London at the end of April for a few weeks : the voyage, however, did not effect a cure, and on his return he had an operation on his throat, and it became evident that he would not be able to return to work for some considerable time. Therefore, on Whit-Sunday, May 20th, he wrote to the King resigning office. He did not appear again in public or in the House of Commons, and died on the 2nd November.

On Tuesday, May 22nd, Mr. Baldwin accepted the King's request to form a Government, and completed that task by

the end of the week, the changes in the Ministry being very few.

It was thought by many when Bonar Law retired that the quarrel with the Conservative supporters of the Coalition might be finally healed, and that as an outward sign of this Mr. Austen Chamberlain or Sir Robert Horne might be included in the Ministry, possibly as Chancellor of the Exchequer. A few days after the new Ministry had been formed, Austen Chamberlain threw some light upon this question in a letter to his constituents, from which it appeared that he would have been willing to accept office but that some of the members of the Cabinet were still not prepared to forget the part he had taken in support of Mr. Lloyd George at the time of the Carlton Club meeting. The real underlying cause, however, of the Government's difficulties was the unsatisfactory condition of trade and industry, and the consequent growth of unemployment.

Baldwin, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had opened his Budget on April 17th, in which he proposed certain reductions in taxation.

The Government was carrying on the policy of the previous Government in endeavouring to grapple with the various difficulties regarding reparations and other foreign affairs: but they were subject to a great deal of criticism and general dissatisfaction, on account of the continued increase of unemployment; and there was a growing feeling among a considerable section of the Conservative Party that the country's troubles could only be overcome by some form of protection.

On October 25th the Prime Minister made a speech at the opening of the Conference of the National Unionist Association at Plymouth, in which he referred to the pledge which had been given about a year before by Bonar Law that there should be no drastic change in the fiscal policy of the country during the lifetime of the then present Parliament. He indicated that he felt this pledge made it difficult for him in existing circumstances to deal successfully with the country's difficulties. This indication of a desire on his part for a protectionist policy was felt by many of the Party to be very gratifying, and the proceedings at the National Conference appeared to show clearly that there was very substantial support for protection in the Party and among members of the Government, including Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Sir Samuel Hoare.

Then came Baldwin's speech on November 2nd in the Free

Trade Hall at Manchester, in which he advocated as an ultimate objective a policy of Free Trade within the Empire and protection of the Empire against foreign competition or dumping. This definitely raised the issue of Protection against Free Trade, and while it encouraged the Tariff Reformers, who were the bulk of the Conservative Party, it aroused all the hostility of the convinced Free-Traders, namely the Liberal Party and a section of the Conservative Party.

The Prime Minister's next important speech was at the Lord Mayor's Guildhall Banquet on November 9th. He then made it clear that he felt that the pledge given by Bonar Law made it very difficult for him to deal successfully with unemployment, and financial business generally. When, therefore, Parliament re-assembled on November 13th, it had become clear that a General Election would take place by the end of the year, or early in the new year, and the Prime Minister informed the House that he proposed to advise a dissolution on November 16th, so that the General Election might be got over before Christmas.

Thus the Parliament which had been elected about a year before and in which the Conservative Government still had a sufficient majority came to an early end.

CHAPTER XI

THE PARLIAMENT OF 1924

THE Election which followed the dissolution of November 1923 was fought mainly on the issue of Protection as against Free Trade, but the old and long-standing devotion of a great part of the country to Free Trade had not yet been overcome, with the result that the Conservatives lost nearly 100 seats, Labour gaining nearly 50 seats and the Liberals a few more, the final figures being Conservatives 258, Labour 191, Liberals 158, and Independents 8.

Thus, while Conservatives had far more members than any other party, no party had a clear majority : Labour came next with 67 less than the Conservatives, and Liberals 33 less than Labour. It was fairly clear that the Conservative Government could not continue. The Labour Party, the next largest, could only form a Government with the support of the Liberals. Baldwin, therefore, did not resign on the result of the General Election, but decided to meet Parliament and to face almost certain defeat.

The Labour Party, for their part, were not merely willing but apparently anxious to take office more or less on any terms, and believed that they had reason to expect sufficient Liberal support.

There was a considerable anti-Socialist feeling both in the country and in Parliament, that the proper course would be for the Conservatives and Liberals to come to some sort of understanding in order to prevent a Labour Government coming into office ; but Asquith very soon made it fairly clear that he and the bulk of the Liberal Party would refuse to do anything of the kind. Baldwin also seemed to have no wish to form any alliance with the Liberal Party or to retain office in dependence upon the support of the Liberals, and had not any fear of what a Labour Government might do in the existing circumstances.

So it was, that for the first time a Labour Government came to hold office ; but as their party so often said afterwards when fault was found with their Government, they came into office but not into power.

The new Parliament met on January 8th, and after the re-election of the Speaker and the swearing-in of members, the King's Speech was read on January 15th : on the 17th the Debate on the Address in reply having been opened, Mr. Clynes

on behalf of the Labour Party moved an amendment on which there was a three days' debate.

Asquith followed Clynes and made it clear that he was in favour of a Labour Government and that his followers would support such a Government within certain limits. The Labour Amendment was ultimately carried by 328 to 251, which was followed by Baldwin's resigning and by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald forming an entirely Labour or Socialist Government with the curious exception of one or two people who were regarded as non-party men, such as Lord Chelmsford, who undertook the India Office, and Mr. H. P. Macmillan (afterwards Lord Macmillan), who became Lord Advocate for Scotland.

Parliament was adjourned again for three weeks, until February 12th.

CHAPTER XII

THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION: A VISIT TO THE U.S.A. IN 1925

THE Government of the United States of America invited the Inter-Parliamentary Union to hold a Conference at Washington in September 1925. Within a certain necessary limit of numbers, any members of the United Kingdom Parliament were included in the invitation and asked to take their wives or daughters with them.

Many members of the House of Commons and some Peers (of all parties) gave in their names to join the United Kingdom delegation. The Government of Canada extended a similar invitation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union to go on from the United States to Canada and to hold a further Conference at Ottawa. I applied to be one of the United Kingdom delegates, and to take my wife with me, and was accepted. Another member who expressed his intention of attending the Conference was Mr. Saklatvala, a Parsee and Member for Battersea, who was a Communist and had become somewhat notorious by reason of his violent and anti-British speeches in public. This made other members very angry, and a few who had been going to attend the Conference stated that they would not do so if Mr. Saklatvala were to be one of the British Delegation. Fortunately for the rest of us, the United States Government refused to allow Mr. Saklatvala to enter the United States, and therefore what had threatened to be a cause of some trouble and difficulty was disposed of.

I was delighted to learn that the leader of the United Kingdom delegation was to be my great friend Sir Robert Horne, afterwards Viscount Horne of Slamannan.

The United Kingdom delegation was in no sense representing the British Government and had no official authority: but the Government was anxious that the delegation should not create any unfortunate or misleading impressions or do anything calculated to embarrass the Government: therefore they thought it necessary to get someone who had held high office to lead the delegation, so they had asked Horne to do this.

Horne was eminently fitted for the purpose, being an ex-Cabinet Minister and generally popular in the House and also in the

United States, where he was well known. He asked me to act as his private secretary and help him, which was very pleasing to me.

We were entertained most hospitably by the Governments of the United States and of Canada. We arrived in New York on the 28th September, and spent a day or two there, going on to Washington on Wednesday 30th, visiting on the way Philadelphia and Swarthmore College.

Arriving at Washington about 10 p.m. we were met at the station by many Senators and Congressmen (in silk hats and tail coats) with a guard of honour and a military band, and driven to the "Mayflower Hotel," where we were to stay. I was much struck on our arrival by the beautiful spectacle of the flood-lit dome of the Capitol.

The Conference met the following morning and afterwards for several days, both morning and afternoon, for the discussion of various subjects, the meetings being held in the Congress Hall at the Capitol. On Saturday, 3rd October, there was a discussion on International Law, and I was selected as the principal speaker for the United Kingdom delegation, and thus had the great honour of speaking in the Congress Hall of the United States: the discussion was to have been opened by that great American jurist and authority on International Law, Mr. Elihu Root; but he was an old man and when the time came did not feel well enough to come to Washington, so his speech was read for him. I followed with a speech, to the preparation of which I had naturally devoted a good deal of time and hard work; but I had the satisfaction of finding that it was generally well received, and I had some very kind compliments paid to me by many of the delegates and in particular by a number of our American Parliamentary friends, and I shall always retain a proud memory of being privileged to make a speech in the Chamber of the other great English-speaking democracy.

During our stay at Washington we attended a special reception by President Coolidge at the White House, and were entertained at dinner practically every night during our stay in Washington by some public body or other. One day we visited Washington's house at Mount Vernon, and on another day we paid a visit to the National Cemetery, when on behalf of the United Kingdom delegation Sir Robert Horne and I laid a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior.

When the Conference came to an end we returned to New

York for a few days and from there we went on-to Niagara, where we stayed one night, and then went as the guests of the Canadian Government through Hamilton, Toronto, and Montreal to Ottawa for a further Conference there, after which we returned to England from Quebec.

I shall always be glad I went on this trip, the only time I have had the opportunity of visiting either the United States or Canada. The Conference generally was interesting and the whole visit generally enjoyable. But what really pleased me most was the opportunity of seeing so much of, and learning so much about, our American colleagues and their political methods and views.

CHAPTER XIII

ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL 1926

THIS Bill, which became the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1926, removed a number of disabilities to which Roman Catholics were still subject under various old Statutes and released Roman Catholic subjects from practically all remaining disabilities except the inability to become Lord Chancellor. It was introduced and carried through the House of Commons by me, as a Private Member's Bill. I am not a Roman Catholic, but by birth and upbringing and by conviction a member of the Church of England: my interest in, and my taking charge of this Bill were due to the strong views I have always held in favour of religious toleration and liberty. The disabilities removed by this Act were for the most part archaic, and had in practice fallen into desuetude: but attempts had been made or threatened to put the old penalties in force by Common Informers, and this was probably the chief cause of the preparation of the Bill. But there were also certain practical disabilities, or at least serious inconveniences, to be got rid of, such as the liability to income tax of Roman Catholic charities, and certain legal provisions which tended to make legacies to Roman Catholic bodies void in law. An unsuccessful attempt had been made in the previous session with a similar Bill which failed, largely owing to the fact that that Bill would have enabled a Roman Catholic to become Lord Chancellor: that Bill had brought a violent and intolerant anti-papist speech from an extreme Glasgow Orangeman, by name Ferguson—then member for Motherwell, one of the Glasgow divisions, which made me so angry that I went across to where my friend Francis Blundell (who was in charge of that Bill) was sitting, and promised him that I would give any help I could to such a Bill.

In the following session of 1926 Francis Blundell and I and several of our friends took part in the Ballot for the right to introduce private members' Bills, but none of us was successful: I therefore advised that an effort should be made to introduce the Bill under what is known as the "Ten Minutes Rule." This suggestion was agreed to; Lord FitzAlan, the leading Roman Catholic Peer, thought it would be better that this should be done by a member who was not himself a Roman Catholic, with

the result that I was asked, and consented, to take charge of the Bill, in which I was ably and actively assisted by Blundell.

For the benefit of those not well acquainted with the House of Commons Procedure, this Ten Minutes Rule should be explained briefly: on certain days of the week a private member is permitted immediately after Questions to "ask leave to bring in" a Bill and to make a short speech (say not over ten minutes), and one similarly short speech can be made in opposition, and the question is then put to the House. This is an extra and unnecessary stage in a Bill's career, as a Bill can be introduced by being merely handed in to the Clerks at the Table. But the advantage of it is that it gives an opportunity of explaining the Bill and its merits, and may thus obtain for it the support of a number of members and so help the passing of the Bill.

So, on the 10th of March, 1926, I moved for leave to introduce it: I took the opportunity of mentioning some of the more absurd and amusing disabilities the Bill would remove, such as the prohibition against priests appearing in public in their ecclesiastical garb, or officiating in a building which had a steeple or a bell, as well as the more practical considerations, and stated that it was not proposed to deal with the position of the Lord Chancellor. No one opposed the motion which was carried without a division: in accordance with the customary procedure I then, in reply to the Speaker's question "Who will prepare and bring in the Bill?" read out the names of the nine other backers of the Bill and myself and went to the bar—whence at the call of the Speaker I walked up the House and handed in the Bill, naming the next day as the day on which it should appear on the Order Paper for the second reading.

The next step was to get the Bill read a second time: in practice this meant formally moving the second reading after 11 p.m. when it could only be carried, as unopposed business, if no member objected. It was (and still is) customary for the Government of the day to ensure that all such private members' Bills *are* objected to, unless and until they have considered them and found them unobjectionable: in this case I had good reason to hope that the Bill would be approved by the Government, but the Cabinet Committee had not yet had time to consider it: consequently it was the business of a Junior Whip to see that some member or members should object to the formal second reading of this and other private members' Bills when the titles thereof were read out after 11 p.m. The Whip charged at the time with

this duty was my friend George Bowyer, now Lord Denham : he came to me with a suggestion that when the Bill was called I should, instead of moving it, defer it to a later day, as the Government had not yet approved it. Realizing that his reason for this was probably that he had difficulty in finding anyone to object to this particular Bill, I declined to accept his suggestion, saying that it could do no harm to the Government if it got its second reading ; so he had to try and find a member to object : the only one he could find was a new member who was not yet feeling quite at home in the House. When the Bill was called and I said " Now," this new member, as requested, called out " Object " : my friends and I thereupon shouted in chorus " Now. Agreed, agreed," and the new member's " Object " then came in a very subdued tone, and the same performance having been again repeated, his courage failed him, he remained silent, and the Bill was formally read a second time.

It was then under Standing Orders automatically referred to a Standing Committee. As printed and read a second time, the Bill consisted of only one operative clause repealing the objectionable enactments, and the formal second clause, giving the short title of the Bill. Attached to the Bill as thus first printed was an explanatory memorandum setting out briefly the effect of the enactments proposed to be repealed, showing how absurd according to modern ideas were some of the disabilities, and how unjust others were, under which (for example) the Roman Catholic Church was legally a " superstitious " body, and the resulting practical hardships in connection with income tax and legacies. Three alterations in the Bill were made before it was finally passed : first, Northern Ireland was excluded from the operation of the Bill, and two new clauses were inserted : as to Northern Ireland, it would have been as wrong to try and force it upon that part of the United Kingdom which has its own Parliament and was hostile to it, as, to my mind, it was for Northern Irish members bitterly to oppose its application to England and Scotland which were friendly to it. The new clauses were of the kind known as " saving clauses " providing that the Bill should not affect certain existing legal conditions which the Bill was not intended to, and did not in fact affect ! They therefore did not materially alter the Bill.

The Committee stage was commenced upon the 28th of April. Douglas Hacking, Under-Secretary of the Home Office, on behalf of the Government, said the Cabinet was considering the Bill

but had not yet been able to come to a decision on it, and therefore the Committee could either adjourn to a later date or proceed with the Bill without the assistance of the Government. Captain Crookshank therefore moved the adjournment of the proceedings : but I opposed this, and it was defeated by 14 to 6 votes. I moved and carried the amendment to exclude Northern Ireland from the Bill. Sir Henry Slesser then moved a new Clause to enable a Roman Catholic to become Lord Chancellor : it was pointed out by myself and others that such a provision would arouse controversy and might endanger the Bill, and Sir Henry therefore withdrew his proposal on the following day, and the Committee stage was then concluded.

Up to this point all had been tolerably plain sailing ; but now some of the more extreme Protestant members, urged on by very vocal anti-papists in the constituencies, took a hand in the proceedings. It had become obvious that a majority of the House was in favour of the Bill, and therefore the only course left open to the opponents of the Bill—and they had considerable prospects of succeeding—was to prevent the Bill from becoming law before the end of the session and thus killing it. We succeeded in getting the Government to give us the last available Friday, for the Report stage and third reading of the Bill, with an intimation that it would be left to a free vote of the House, the Government neither supporting nor opposing it. The leading opponents though few in number, were formidable, including at their head Sir Malcolm Macnaghten, Sir Alexander Sprot, and Colonel McInnes Shaw, supported by (among others) Mr. David Reed, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, and (in his private capacity and not as Solicitor-General) Sir Thomas Inskip : they put down a number of amendments, some of a definitely wrecking character, and most dangerous of all, three new clauses : the danger of these new clauses was that on Report stage they are taken first, and it might well be therefore that several hours would be taken up in discussing these, so that the time might not be sufficient to deal with all the amendments and there might be no prospect of getting the Closure. To meet this, I put down on the last available day another new clause, giving as far as possible, without injuring the Bill, all the provisions asked for in the new clauses of the opponents, and claimed the right as the member in charge of the Bill to have my new clause given priority on the Order Paper. By this means I was able to dispose of these other new clauses, which would naturally be regarded as covered by a decision on

mine. When I handed in my new clause at the Table, the Clerk of the House, Sir Lonsdale Webster, who was the Editor of *Erskine May*, said I could not claim priority for my new clause, as only the Government had that right : I replied that as member in charge of the Bill I had that right, and on his adhering to the view he had expressed, I replied, "Then your opinion differs from that of the learned Editor of *Erskine May*" : he laughed and said, "I sometimes forget the opinions expressed by that learned Editor," and he reached for his volume of *Erskine May*, looked up the point, and found I was right.

Just after this on passing through the Central Lobby, I came across the leaders of my opponents in deep consultation : as I passed them I said, "You fellows need not worry, I have just put down a new clause which will satisfy all the opponents of the Bill"—Macnaghten said, "Not all of them"—I said, "All reasonable ones"—to which he rejoined, "Well, you'll put me among the unreasonable ones, won't you?" and I said, "With pleasure."

This new clause move of mine was successful. On Friday December the 2nd the Report stage was commenced in an unusually full House. My new clause was agreed to, and the others consequently not selected, and we got on to the amendments. Of these, I was able to accept one : of the others several were pressed to a division and defeated by large majorities. The Report stage was concluded and the third reading moved at about 3.40 p.m. leaving about twenty minutes for the discussion of Sir Alexander Sprot's reasoned motion for rejection. Just on the stroke of 4 p.m. I moved the Closure : the Speaker accepted the motion which was carried without a division : the main question was then put and a division was called, but the opponents of the Bill refrained at the last moment from putting in "Tellers" so that the motion for rejection was negatived, and the third reading was carried without a division.

The Bill then went to the House of Lords, where Viscount FitzAlan took charge of it and after brief discussion, including an approving speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury, it was passed through all its stages and received the Royal Assent on December the 16th.

One of the notable speeches on the Bill in the House of Commons was one made by that sturdy Scottish Minister the Reverend James Barr who made an eloquent speech in favour of religious toleration, in course of which he claimed that the blood of the

Covenanters ran in his veins, and stated that the Presbyterian Church did not require to be supported by penal laws against other churches.

The passing of this Act was hailed with delight by Roman Catholics ail over the world: the progress of the Bill had been referred to in the Press of all the Roman Catholic countries in Europe and other continents, and Mr. Blundell and I were both honoured by Pius XI by being given the Papal Gold Medal—an almost unique honour for me, as I believe it had never previously been given to anyone not a Roman Catholic, except Mr. Lloyd George, to whom it had been given after one of the many Peace Conferences held after 1918. Shortly afterwards the medal was also given to Mr. J. S. Franey—a Roman Catholic member of the English Bar, who had been responsible for drafting the Bill and for much valuable legal assistance in connection with it.

During the progress of the Bill I received many letters of protest from extreme Protestants: a considerable number of these were violent and intemperate in their tone and one contained a definite threat against my life—the only time I have ever achieved that distinction! But those letters for the most part stood condemned by their own unreasonableness, and they were far outnumbered by the many letters of obviously sincere congratulation and thanks which came to me after the Bill was passed, from almost every quarter of the globe.

The following spring I went to Rome with my wife to stay with some Italian friends and to deal with certain legal business. Being informed of this the Pope was kind enough to summon my wife and myself to a private audience. The arrangements for this were made through the British Diplomatic Representative at the Vatican, then Sir Esmé Howard, who kindly provided an interpreter, as I knew little Italian. When I went to see Sir Esmé a day or two before the audience, he asked me whether there was any special subject on which I wished to speak with his Holiness. I said I naturally wanted to thank him for the medal and to talk about the Bill, but otherwise I had no subject specially in mind, though some of my friends had suggested my speaking to him about the proposals for a fixed Easter: Sir Esmé said he did not think I should get far on that subject, for the last time the Pope had been told that an English Cabinet Minister wanted to talk to him about it, he had said that he believed it had been discussed some 300 years ago at the Council of Trent, and that perhaps it might be considered again in another 300 years! So

I did not attempt to raise the subject. At the beginning of the audience, at which no one but my wife and myself was present except the interpreter, I tried speaking French : when I hesitated, being hung up for a word I wanted, the Pope said in French, "Speak English : I understand it quite well, though I cannot speak it much, as unfortunately my love of mountaineering prevented my spending as much time in England as I could have wished," so I spoke English and he spoke French, and we conversed without needing much help from the interpreter. I was impressed with his intimate knowledge of affairs in all parts of the world : he questioned me very closely on the subject of unemployment in Great Britain and then switched on to the troubles of that time in Shanghai, and then on to India. The interview lasted about forty-five minutes, and he asked my wife about our family. When we left the Vatican I remarked to my wife that it was a rather disappointing interview, because when one came to look back on it, I found he had made me do all the talking : he plied me with questions all the time.

I have mentioned that the Bill did not deal with the matter of the Lord Chancellor, because that was calculated to raise opposition and it may be convenient to say a few words on that matter. The bar to a Roman Catholic becoming Lord Chancellor is rather an intricate legal question, but I believe the only thing which prevents it is that the Lord Chancellor has to take a special form of Oath, which no Roman Catholic could take. The common reason given against a change is that the Lord Chancellor is "the Keeper of the King's Conscience." But those who give this reason usually cannot explain it. It must be an almost unique case of the influence on British minds of a piece of meaningless nonsense. The expression dates from pre-Reformation days, when the Chancellor was usually a Clèric (few others having the necessary degree of education !) and probably also acted as the King's Confessor. There was a little more reason in the expression in later times when the Sovereign usually acted through his Chancellor, in the exercise of his equitable jurisdiction in granting relief to those who suffered wrong through the Law. All that has, of course, been long ago got rid of by the establishment of Courts of Equity and the development of our judicial system. When this is explained people fall back on the argument that the Lord Chancellor has extensive Church of England Patronage : but this too is a baseless argument, for it has long been the law that no Roman Catholic whether he be Lord Chancellor or some other

official or a private individual can exercise patronage in the Church of England, and provision is made as to how such patronage is to be exercised when the legal owner of the right is a Roman Catholic.

Looking back over the nearly twenty years since this Act became law I see no reason to regret it : I think it has done no harm to non-Roman Catholic churches nor to the country generally. On the other hand it has removed from the large Roman Catholic population a justifiable sense of grievance, and has done much towards promoting unity in the good work of practical, as distinguished from doctrinal, Christianity.

In matters of religion there is still in all churches and sects, Roman Catholic and non-Roman Catholic, too much intolerance : and I have no sympathy with intolerance in matters of religion. On the other hand, there are I know many people who regard the Roman Catholic Church as a danger to the country, because they believe that Church to be working to obtain what is called " Temporal Power." I can understand their opposition to any concessions to Roman Catholics, but personally I do not fear or believe in any danger of that kind.

CHAPTER XIV

PARLIAMENT AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND. THE NEW PRAYER BOOK DEBATES AND OTHER MATTERS

A MATTER of very great interest in 1927 and 1928 was the proposed revision of the Prayer Book, in connection with which it will be convenient to deal here generally with the National Assembly of the Church of England and its relations with Parliament.

The National Assembly of the Church of England (commonly known as the Church Assembly) was established in accordance with addresses of the Convocations of Canterbury and York to His Majesty, on the 10th of May, 1919, which set out the constitution of the Assembly and of the Legislative Committee thereof. In December of that year, Parliament passed the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919, under which Parliament delegated to the Church Assembly powers to legislate by means of "measures" in respect of any "matter concerning the Church of England," such powers extending to the amendment or repeal in whole, or in part, of any Act of Parliament. But this delegated power was made subject to certain restrictions in order to preserve the ultimate sovereignty of Parliament. The Act established an "Ecclesiastical Committee" composed of fifteen members of the House of Lords, nominated by the Lord Chancellor, and fifteen members of the House of Commons, nominated by the Speaker: under the Act every measure passed by the Church Assembly has to be submitted by the Legislative Committee to this Ecclesiastical Committee with such comments and explanations as the Ecclesiastical Committee deem expedient, or may be directed by the Church Assembly to add; the Ecclesiastical Committee has to consider the measures so submitted, and, if they think necessary, may hold a conference with the Legislative Committee. After so considering the measure the Ecclesiastical Committee has to draft a report upon the measure to Parliament "stating the nature and legal effect of the measure and its (i.e. Ecclesiastical Committee's) views as to the expediency thereof, especially with relation to the constitutional rights of all His Majesty's subjects." The report of the Ecclesiastical Committee with a copy of the measure having been so laid before both Houses of Parlia-

ment, the measure is not to become law unless and until a resolution is passed by each House of Parliament, directing that the measure be presented to His Majesty for the Royal Assent.

This was a remarkable wholesale delegation of power by Parliament, but was held to be fully justified by the fact that there were many Church matters which had for long been calling for legislation, but which Parliament, or at least the House of Commons, had not found time to deal with. It is to be noted that the power reserved to Parliament is in fact a power to accept or reject the measure as a whole and does not give Parliament any power of amending any such measure.

The measures passed under this Act have for the most part worked well and satisfactorily : but the work of the Ecclesiastical Committee is a very important part of the whole business. Out of upwards of 700 measures which have been passed by the Church Assembly since this Act, only one (or more correctly speaking two) measures have been rejected by Parliament, those being the two similar measures relating to the proposed new Prayer Book, the first of which was submitted to Parliament in December 1927, and the second, a similar measure with a slightly altered form of the new Prayer Book, was submitted in June of the following year. These measures will be more fully described later. There have also been several measures which have caused a certain amount of discussion and some opposition in Parliament, and on two occasions certain difficulties have arisen as between Parliament and the Church Assembly. One of these was in connection with legislation which would be of such a nature that, if it were dealt with by Parliament, it would have to be dealt with by a Private Bill. The other was the case of a measure passed by the Church Assembly in 1943, which gave the Ecclesiastical Committee some trouble, and resulted in their report thereon being in a rather unusual form.

The motion in favour of the first New Prayer Book Measure was moved in the House of Commons on the 15th of December, 1927. It had been carried in the House of Lords on the previous night, after a very long three-day debate, by a large majority (Ayes 241, Noes 88) amid scenes of considerable excitement : the attendance in the Lords had been far greater than usual, as was shown by the figures of the division. Not for many years had the galleries of the House of Lords been so crowded, and large crowds, who could not get into the Chamber, filled the lobbies waiting for the result of the division.

When the motion came before the House of Commons, the House was crowded with members, and the strangers' galleries too were filled, the Archbishops and Bishops filling the Peers' Gallery, but the lobby was not so filled with people as on the previous night.

Religion, the most powerful force in the world and the greatest potential source of energy in the individual, though often little recognized and little used, is part of the "make-up" of nine persons out of ten in this country. Moreover, we have a National Established Church of England: "Church and State" is a combination which is part of our traditional history: people of all sorts of religious sects or factions, inside and outside the Church of England, regard that National Church as a national possession in which they have a part interest.

Many regard that Church as the great bulwark of true Christianity against what they regard as its greatest enemy, the (to them) mistaken and schismatic Church of Rome. Many have a genuine fear of the aspirations for Temporal Power of that Church, and regard the Protestant Church of England as embodying the idea of true liberty as opposed to despotic aims and ideas of the Papacy.

Hence any proposed radical alteration in the Book of Common Prayer—a sort of Foundation Charter of the Church of England—roused intense interest and excitement, both among those who thought the alterations would strengthen the Church and those who thought they would weaken or destroy it. The interest in this subject, therefore, was both widespread and very real. Another factor which tended to make the debate an exciting one was that members were left entirely free to take whatever course each member might choose, without any guidance from the Government or from their party leaders.

The motion was moved by Mr. (afterwards Viscount) Bridge-man, an old and experienced member, in a good and very moderate speech, in which he described himself as in no sense an Ecclesiastic nor a theologian but as "the man in the pew": though his speech was a good one, it was not so good as many I heard from him: he (as indeed was the case with several of the supporters of the motion) seemed to be nervous, and to be overburdened by the solemnity and importance of the occasion. Towards the end of his speech he was subjected to some interruption by a section of the opponents of the measure, who misunderstood—or professed to misunderstand—and protested against some expressions

used by him : this seemed to upset him very much, and apparently caused him to bring his speech to an end sooner than he intended.

The opposition was led by Sir William Joynson-Hicks (afterwards Lord Brentford) who was well known as an extreme and enthusiastic member of the evangelical section of Churchmen : his speech dealt largely with doctrinal questions, and was directed mainly to expressing dislike and fear of tendencies to Roman Catholicism : but it was an able and telling speech (probably about the best he ever made in the House) and impressed everyone with his sincerity : it certainly had considerable effect upon many members who had been in doubt as to how to vote. But the great speech of the debate was undoubtedly that made by Mr. Rosslyn Mitchell, a comparatively young man who had only been a member of the House for about twelve months : he had already established a reputation as a good speaker : on this occasion his deep sense of the strength of his case and a determination to do his utmost to ensure the defeat of the motion, caused him to make one of the most effective speeches I ever heard in the House of Commons.

The case of the supporters of the motion was undoubtedly hampered by the fact that only one day had been allowed for the debate. The intensity, I had almost said "ferocity," of the attack upon the new book may have unnerved some of its supporters : at any rate, their comparatively quiet reasoning was not powerful enough to restore the position in the time available. The opponents realized the success they had obtained in the debate, and began to get restive and impatient for the division before there should be any weakening of the advantage they had gained among the mass of doubtful and wavering members.

It was obvious that the voting would be very close and no one on either side felt any certainty about the result. Therefore directly the tellers appeared at the Table, and the position taken by those for the "Noes" showed that they had won, a tremendous burst of cheering broke out and continued for an appreciable time, until succeeded by a moment of dead silence to hear the figures announced, and then broke out again, till members gradually went out of the Chamber to discuss the result : the motion had been defeated by 247 to 205.

But the matter was not finally disposed of yet. The Archbishop of Canterbury and other Bishops who had worked so

hard with him on the New Prayer Book hoped that certain not very extensive alterations and additions would lessen opposition based upon apprehensions of "Romanizing" tendencies.

A new measure was therefore submitted to Parliament in the following June, with a "Deposited Book" incorporating these alterations and additions.

The motion in favour of this second measure was moved in the House of Commons on the 13th of June, 1928, by Sir Boyd (now Lord) Merriman, and two full days were given to the debate. The scene was very similar to that on the occasion of the debate in the preceding December, though the public excitement was not quite so much in evidence: this was possibly due to a rather more confident feeling on the part of the opponents. They had not been idle in the intervening six months: a book on the subject by Sir William Joynson-Hicks had been published, and a considerable campaign against the New Prayer Book had been carried out by the extreme Protestant Party.

The debate was, though longer, not quite such a good debate: most of those who had spoken in the December debate spoke again in this one, but their speeches were for the most part inferior and much of the debate developed into longer and really rather boring wrangles on doctrinal questions. As the second day's debate was drawing to a close, and the division was approaching, the excitement increased again, though the general feeling was that this motion too would fail: that turned out to be correct, but there was considerable surprise when the figures were announced as Ayes 220, Noes 266, thus giving a majority against the measure of 46, even larger than in the case of the first measure. The poor old Archbishop Davidson who was in the gallery, with a number of Bishops with him, could not conceal how deeply he felt this conclusive failure of a project on which he had expended so much time and work, and from which he had hoped so much: general and widespread sympathy was expressed for him.

Let us now turn to the measure which raised the question about measures of a Private Bill nature.

The Liverpool City Churches Act 1897 (Amendment) Measure of 1938 was a measure which, if it had been a Bill in Parliament, would have been in the nature of a Private Bill, and would have had to comply with all the Standing Orders relating to Private Bills. According to the Manual of Procedure compiled by the late Sir Courtenay Ilbert, a former Clerk of the House of Commons,

a Private Bill may be briefly defined as one, the object of which is to alter the law relating to some particular locality, or to confer rights on, or relieve from liability some particular person or body of persons. This particular measure was (as its title shows) a measure to amend the Liverpool City Churches Act 1897, which was a Private Act of Parliament. By this Act powers were given to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners with the consent of the Bishop of Liverpool to make grants from a certain fund for the building or endowment of new churches *WITHIN the City of Liverpool*, and by an amending Act to make payments towards the cost of the purchase of sites for new churches within the same area. The measure in question proposed to increase these powers so as to extend the area to churches, or the purchase of sites *near to* as well as actually *within* the City of Liverpool: thus the measure, if introduced as a Parliamentary Bill, would have had to be dealt with as a Private Bill. An extremely important part of the procedure in Parliament relating to Private Bills is that in both Houses there is a Committee Stage which is of a judicial nature at which the promoters have to prove their case and an opportunity is afforded to persons or corporate bodies liable to be affected by the Bill and who have lodged petitions against it to have their case put before the Committee by Counsel. The Church Assembly Powers Act (often referred to as the Enabling Act), which, as already explained, delegates to the Church Assembly the power to legislate upon matters concerning the Church of England, does not make any distinction between legislation which would be by Public Bill and legislation which would be by Private Bill: the delegation therefore includes power to legislate in respect of matters which in Parliament would be dealt with by Private Bill. But the Church Assembly has no machinery for dealing with such measures in the way Parliament deals with Private Bills: it therefore deals with measures of both kinds in the same way. When this Liverpool measure was put forward for submission to the Ecclesiastical Committee, the legal advisers of that Committee and of the Lord Chairman in the House of Lords and the Chairman of Ways and Means in the House of Commons drew the attention of the two Chairmen to the fact that the measure if introduced in Parliament as a Bill would have had to be a Private Bill, and that Standing Orders relating to Private Bills had not been complied with in regard to the measure. The merits or demerits of this particular measure may be regarded as beside the point. The measure obviously drew

attention to the inadvisability of permitting the Church Assembly to deal with matters of a Private Bill nature without the opportunities which Standing Orders and the procedure thereunder gives to private subjects affected thereby: and if this measure had been allowed to pass into law, it would obviously have been a dangerous precedent for the future. Consequently the Lord Chairman and I, as Chairman of Ways and Means, communicated with the Church Assembly in regard to this question. Various suggestions and proposals were made on the part of the Church Assembly for setting up some special procedure for dealing with measures of this kind: long and careful consideration was given to schemes of procedure for the purpose, and to the method of setting up such procedure, but this particular measure not having been subjected to any such procedure, I intimated to the Church Assembly that in the event of the measure, or any measure of the same kind being submitted to the House of Commons, I should consider it my duty to explain the point to the House as to the Standing Orders having not been complied with, and to advise that the House should reject the motion. After a consultation between the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Lang (now Lord Lang of Lambeth) on the one hand and the Lord Chairman and myself on the other, an understanding was arrived at that the Church Assembly would not proceed further with this measure or any similar Private Legislation pending the establishment of special Private Legislation procedure in the Church Assembly, and would in the meanwhile leave such matters to be dealt with by Private Bill in Parliament. This particular Liverpool measure was therefore not proceeded with.

This question of Private Legislation never seems to have occurred to people's minds, or to have been considered in any way when the Enabling Bill was passed. So far as Parliament is concerned their position was all right because they could always reject any measure of that kind: but this is not a very satisfactory method of dealing with such a matter, particularly from the point of view of the Church Assembly. Probably if the point had been carefully considered when the Enabling Bill was being prepared, steps would have been taken either to make special provision for Private Legislation by the Church Assembly, or to omit from the legislative powers delegated to the Church Assembly any power to legislate regarding matters which in Parliament would be treated as Private Bills. It is not necessary here to go into any detailed discussion as to the proposals for providing

special machinery for dealing with Private Legislation by Church Assembly measures : further progress with them was suspended for the time being on account of the War. The basic element to be remembered is that in such matters the subjects of the Realm are entitled to have their case heard and decided by Parliament, and that it would be an infringement of the rights of the subject for Parliament to deprive the subject of this right by any careless delegation of its powers and duties to a lesser authority without proper safeguards. A modified delegation in certain matters of a definitely restricted type (such as in the case of gas or electricity orders and so forth), if given subject to proper safeguards, may be all right, but such a general delegation in respect of all matters concerning the Church of England would seem to have been contrary to constitutional principles had it not been for the power retained by Parliament to veto any measure passed by the Church Assembly : Parliament's duty in future will therefore be to veto any measure of a Private Bill type which has not been through some procedure similar to that prescribed by Parliament for dealing with Private Bills. This has, in effect, been accepted by the Church Assembly in assenting to the arrangement arrived at with Archbishop Lang, and so long as the Church Assembly acts in accord with that arrangement (and there is no reason to suppose they will not do so) all will be well ; but it will still be incumbent on Parliament to see that this is so, and to consider with care when the time comes proposals for dealing with Private Legislation by the Church Assembly.

The question which arose regarding the Reorganization Areas Measure in 1943 and 1944 is of a different kind. This measure contained a provision for compensating an incumbent who might be required to vacate his benefice under the terms of the measure : such compensation was to be in the form of an annuity, the amount of which, if not settled by agreement, was to be such as a Special Committee set up by the measure should determine to be fair and equitable, having regard to all the circumstances : but the measure did not provide that such compensation should be not less than the fair value of the incumbent's life interest in the benefice in question, and it was conceivable that in certain cases it might be less than that fair value. The measure therefore raised the question of taking away from a subject the property to which he was legally entitled, giving him compensation which might be less than the value of his legal interest as tenant for life of his benefice. The measure in question was, by general

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consent, extremely important, and very urgent, and it was considered that this would undoubtedly be the opinion of both Houses of Parliament, and that consequently it was very undesirable that the Ecclesiastical Committee should make a report which would be unfavourable and calculated to lead to the measure being rejected. Moreover, the point was more of a technical than a practical nature and the suggested possible slight injustice to an incumbent was unlikely to happen, and extremely unlikely to happen often. At the same time it had to be remembered that by the Enabling Measure the Ecclesiastical Committee is especially enjoined to state in its report upon a measure the nature and legal effect thereof, and the Committee's views as to the expediency thereof, "especially with relation to the constitutional rights of all His Majesty's subjects": it was difficult to convince all members of the Ecclesiastical Committee that the measure would not interfere with the constitutional rights of a small class of His Majesty's subjects, namely certain of those incumbents, who might, under the measure, be required to vacate their benefices. The Ecclesiastical Committee were, under all the circumstances of the case, extremely averse to making a report which would be in the least degree hostile to this very important and urgent measure: but at the same time it did seem to be clearly their duty under the Enabling Act, to call attention to this possible effect of the measure. Consequently the Committee, after considerable discussion, arrived at a form of report which they considered would comply with the duties enjoined upon them by the Enabling Act, and would, at the same time, allow of their reporting that the measure was expedient: in other words, they left it to Parliament to accept the measure, notwithstanding its possible but comparatively trifling interference with the constitutional rights of a very small class of His Majesty's subjects. The Committee in their report, therefore, included a Paragraph (No. 4) drawing attention to the point, in the following form:

Inevitably such reorganizations involve widespread interference with the existing constitutional rights of His Majesty's subjects: of parishioners, incumbents, patrons and others. After considering the measure, the Committee are satisfied that proper regard has been paid to these rights, and provision made for compensation in appropriate cases.

But the Committee feel it their duty to call attention to one case of interference with the existing rights of certain of His Majesty's subjects, and the method proposed in the measure for providing compensation

for such interference. Under the measure, certain incumbents of benefices, through no default on their part, will be deprived of their constitutional and legal right for life to income arising from endowments attached to the benefice. After careful thought, the Committee have come to the conclusion that the provisions for compensation may be relied upon to provide that the compensation shall be not less than the fair value of the incumbent's life interest in such endowments of which he is to be deprived.

The final Paragraph 5 of the Report then stated :

5. In the opinion of the Committee, the measure is urgently needed, and therefore having called attention to the matter just referred to, they are of opinion that the measure is expedient.

This case calls attention to the fact that Parliament has no power to amend measures passed by the Church Assembly, but only power to assent to, or reject : of course it has from time to time been suggested that the Enabling Act should be amended so as to give Parliament power to assent to measures subject to certain amendments. This point was most carefully considered when the Enabling Bill was passing through Parliament, but those concerned at the time agreed that this would not be satisfactory. The real objection to such a course would be that it would, to a very great extent, impair the powers which it was desired to give to the Church Assembly, a body of a " specialist " character, composed of people with special knowledge of Church affairs. It is clear that if Parliament had power to amend, in addition to a mere power to accept or reject, the result would be that when a measure came before Parliament, a number of amendments would be certain to be put forward from various quarters of all sorts and kinds, with the result that the whole discussion of the details of the measure would take place over again in Parliament, the very thing which it was the object of the Enabling Act to avoid. This shows the advisability of the Church Assembly exercising the greatest care to see that measures do not contain provisions under which the Ecclesiastical Committee would feel obliged to make an unfavourable report to Parliament. Generally speaking, the Church Assembly usually does this : but in this case they put a most important measure in some jeopardy through failing to make a very trifling alteration in the measure, in spite of the fact that in the Assembly attention was drawn to the point, and an amendment proposed which would have removed the ground of objection. It is a great mistake for people to urge

Parliament to commit a breach of constitutional principle because it is only a trifling one : it is by actions of this kind that the liberties of the people, which it is the prime duty of the House of Commons to protect, get nibbled away.

One cannot help recalling the excuse for the midshipman's illegitimate baby, that it was only a very little one !

CHAPTER XV

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

THE delegation of legislative powers to the Church Assembly is, I believe, the only instance of a wholesale delegation of this kind which Parliament has carried out: it has relieved Parliament of a great amount of work, and has been satisfactory.

Another type of delegation which Parliament has put into practice for a good many years is the delegation of legislative powers in respect of gas, electricity, and other public utility undertakings. This type has worked moderately well, but is by no means completely satisfactory: the arrangements under which Orders are subject to the approval of Parliament require consideration and improvement.

The remaining third type of delegation is the one which has caused so much trouble and dissatisfaction, the practice of inserting in all sorts and kinds of Bills, clauses delegating all sorts and kinds of legislative power to Ministers, Government Departments, and even other persons or bodies of persons, in somewhat haphazard and various forms. This type is at present thoroughly unsatisfactory, and in spite of all the attention which has been given to it, still requires much more careful consideration. Delegation of this kind is necessary, and could be made more useful if carefully thought out and systematized with proper and effective safeguards. It is no use to rail against it: it has come to stay: it is necessary, and should be very useful, but it needs to be developed into a properly devised piece of Parliamentary machinery: it deserves, and needs, the attention of Parliamentarians of experience, and men with scientific inventive genius. With proper development, delegation might become a means of easing, and so speeding up, the work of the House of Commons, while still preserving, instead of endangering, the sovereignty of Parliament and the liberties and rights of the people.

It would take too long to go into further detail on this question of delegated legislation. It has lately been brought much into notice by the extension of the practice during the War and much has been written about it. But my experiences in regard to two "Orders" made under delegated powers are somewhat interesting.

The first of them related to an Order of the second type, those connected with public utility undertakings. In 1925 an Order

was made constituting the London and Home Counties Electricity Area. The Order was made under the Electricity Act 1919, by the Electricity Commissioners. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, three Inquiries had been held by the Electricity Commissioners, at each of which the Borough of Watford and the Herts County Council had opposed the inclusion of Watford in the area, without success : they had also adopted a similar course before the Minister of Transport, again without success, and it only remained for the Order to be submitted to Parliament for approval. The inclusion of Watford in the area would have meant that the remarkably successful and flourishing electricity undertaking of the Borough of Watford, which gave an extremely satisfactory inexpensive supply and materially assisted the local rates, would have been taken over by the London and Home Counties Authority. Watford's prospects of success now, after all the Inquiries, seemed almost hopeless : as I have said, there is no established machinery for moving amendments to such an Order : but I found that apparently there was in theory, at least, nothing to prevent a member doing so : I therefore gave notice of the desired amendments, which were rather numerous, to effect the exclusion of Watford from the area, and made it known that my friends and I (considerable numbers had promised to support me), should oppose the Order as a whole, unless it was so amended. This led to my having a considerable discussion on the matter with the Minister in charge of the Order who was my friend Colonel Moore Brabazon, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport (now Lord Brabazon of Tara) : he was not very strongly opposed to the exclusion of Watford, but he argued that the Order having been already made and only requiring confirmation by Parliament, could not be altered on the floor of the House : I disagreed, and he said there was no precedent for such a proceeding : my reply was that I intended to create a precedent, as I could not find any good reason against it, and that my proposal would cause far less trouble than for him to have to withdraw the Order and make a new one : eventually he was good enough to say that if the Speaker and his advisers raised no objection to the procedure, he would accept my amendments. When therefore the Order came before the House of Commons on the 27th of July, 1925, he stated that he was prepared to accept my amendments : I formally moved them, briefly explaining their effect and the reasons for them, and the House agreed thereto. The result was that the form of the motion which he

had to move (and which the House agreed to) was that the Order, amended as proposed, be agreed to. This was, of course, a great victory for Watford and for me, and I received the formal thanks of the Borough Council of Watford and of the Hertfordshire County Council. It was a rather clumsy way of proceeding, but it was effective and served to create a precedent and to draw attention to the lack of any recognized satisfactory method of procedure for amending Orders of this kind. Incidentally it shows what a private member can sometimes achieve by persistence and a study of procedure.

The other case referred to an Order of the third type. In 1930 an Order in Council was made under the Census Act 1920, providing for the taking of a Census throughout the country. Under the Act this Order had to be "laid on the Table" of both Houses and lie on the Table for twenty sitting days, during which it was open to members to move a "prayer" against it. I had taken some part in the debate on the Bill (which ultimately became the Act of 1920) with a view to protecting people from having to answer unnecessary and embarrassing questions on the Census paper; so when I found that this Order had been laid, I naturally wanted to see it, and also I thought it would be a good opportunity to see what difficulties there might be in the way of inspecting it. As, for the second reason, I was wishing to deal with it as a test case, I thought it well to get some comparatively inexperienced ordinary member of the House to try to inspect it. I therefore obtained the assistance of such a member, telling him that this Order had been "laid on the Table" and that he therefore had a right to see and examine a copy of it, and that according to practice it should be available to him in the Library. I asked him to go to the Library and find this Order, suggesting that his best course would be to go to the Librarian, or one of the staff, and ask for it. It so happened that I had hit upon an example which was peculiarly useful to me, for the member came back to me and reported that he had had a lot of difficulty about it: the Clerk in the Library had told him that the only copy was locked up in a cupboard of which the Librarian had the key, and the Librarian was out at the moment: later he went to the Librarian who proceeded to try and find the copy of the Order in the locked cupboard, but could not find it. I encouraged the member to proceed further, and press his right to see it. This he did, only to be told that the only copy they had, had been sent to the printers and was therefore not available at the time. I then

applied for it myself with the same result. I therefore raised the matter in the House after questions, and asked the Speaker for a ruling that the Order was not effectively laid unless a copy of it, not a dummy, but a full copy, was available to members for the full number of sitting days, during which it had to "lie on the Table." I explained to the House that I had it in mind to put down a motion praying that the Order be not made, but that owing to my having been unable to obtain or see a copy of the Order, I should be unable to decide my course of action in time unless I could obtain such a ruling. The Speaker, following a ruling by one of his predecessors which I quoted to him, ruled as I desired and I was therefore able to (and did) hand in notice of a prayer against the Order. This of course roused the Government Chief Whip, Mr. Tom Kennedy, and also led to something of a quarrel between the Ministry of Health (the Government Department concerned with the Order) and the Library; the Ministry of Health stated that they had sent two copies to the Library in order that one might still be available while the other was sent to the printers: the Librarian, on the other hand, said he could not find that the Library had received more than one copy.

What then happened according to the Official Reports, and so far as was made known to the public, was as follows: In due course on the 26th of November, I formally moved my prayer against the Order: in doing so, I referred to the fact that I was able to do so, only under Mr. Speaker's ruling, and said that I thought it right for me to say that the absence of the Order from the Library, of which I had complained "was due to one of those instances of absence of mind or inadvertence on the part of an individual, which perhaps might well be passed over," but that in fact the Ministry was not to blame, as they had sent two copies to the Library, and that the Library were not really responsible for the absence of the second copy. I left the matter there and no member pressed for any further explanation. As to my prayer, I said I had now found the Order unobjectionable, but that I wanted certain information about the cost of the Census, and that if this were given I should be willing to withdraw my motion. Miss Susan Lawrence, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, replied, giving me the information I asked for. In course of her reply she said she had gone into the subject of the missing Order, was satisfied that her Ministry was not to blame, and was grateful to me for what I had said about

it. She really meant, as I will explain later, that she was grateful to me for *not* having said more than I did ! There the incident ended as far as was made public, and in due course I withdrew my prayer.

What really happened was this : Two copies *had* been sent to the Library, who had sent one to the printers ; then a comparatively new Labour Member of Parliament had asked to see the copy of the Order, and the one intended to be retained by the Library had been handed to him for inspection ; instead of returning it to a member of the staff, he had, perhaps inadvertently, or in ignorance or for some reason or other, put it in his attaché case and taken it away ! When the member concerned found what a stir and commotion had resulted from what he had done, he got thoroughly frightened and feared getting into serious trouble ! He therefore went off to see his Chief Whip and Miss Lawrence, made a complete confession of what he had done, and begged them to do their best to save him from punishment or disgrace. Miss Lawrence asked me to go and see her, and told me exactly what had occurred, and begged me not to get the offending member into more trouble than I could help : I laughed and readily promised that I would do my best in that way : I told her I had no wish to get him into trouble or even to make public what he had done, but had only wanted to obtain inspection of the Order, and to be able to move my prayer. She told me that the member concerned had been in a quite pitiable state of anxiety, and had been thoroughly “ dressed down ” by the Chief Whip. I thought he had been quite sufficiently punished, and so, as I arranged with Miss Lawrence, the matter was dealt with as I have described.

So, friendly relations were restored between the Ministry and the Library, and the member who had caused the trouble heard no more of it.

CHAPTER XVI

VISIT TO INDIA, 1928-9

IN the summer of 1928, the late Maharajah Gaikwar of Baroda, having bought a large house on the outskirts of Watford, took up his residence there for some weeks. I saw a good deal of him while he was there : at his request I assisted him in entertaining and making the acquaintance of local notabilities at a large garden party he gave, and lunched with him at his house, and had many long and interesting talks with him on political matters, and on his government of his State.

At his garden party he told me that he was hoping that Lord Birkenhead, then Secretary of State for India, would come, as he had promised to do so if possible. I told him that at half-past seven that night Lord Birkenhead, an old friend of mine, was to be at the Conservative Club in Watford to address a garden meeting there, so that no doubt he would come and would go on to that meeting from the garden party : I suggested to the Maharajah that possibly he might come to the meeting with Birkenhead : he said that he would like to do so, and so in due course he and Birkenhead arrived at the club together. I arranged for the Maharajah to occupy a seat on the platform at the meeting, at which I presided as Chairman. I invited the Maharajah to say a few words at the meeting after Birkenhead's speech, which again he said he would like to do.

Birkenhead, as usual, made a very good speech, and expressed his pleasure at the Maharajah's presence there, and paid him some happy compliments, speaking of him as a colleague with him in the work of Empire. The Maharajah afterwards made a brief but excellent speech, in which, after speaking of the admiration with which he regarded the Secretary of State for India, he said that it was a great pleasure to him to see something of how people in England carried on their political affairs.

Another Indian Prince with whom I was on very friendly and rather intimate terms was the popular "Ranji," the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar (now also dead), with whom I had been somewhat closely associated in negotiations regarding a large loan which he wanted to raise for proposed developments in his State.

Towards the end of 1928 there was reason for me to go to Calcutta in connection with my firm's business there. Having

settled certain matters in the House of Commons (which I will refer to later) I arranged to go during the Christmas recess with my wife.

My wife and I accordingly left London in December, travelling overland to Marseilles, where we boarded the P. & O. liner "Rajputana" for Bombay, whence we travelled by the Express Mail Train to Calcutta, after spending a day driving round Bombay with some friends who met us there. I only stayed a fortnight in Calcutta, and then came back by the same ship, my wife staying behind for several weeks longer.

I was fortunate in my companions on the voyage out. Lord Inchcape, Chairman of the P. & O. Line, travelled on the ship from Marseilles to Alexandria. I already knew him slightly, but my friend "Sammy" Samuel had kindly written a note to him especially commending us to his care: other fellow passengers were the Aga Khan, whom I knew slightly, and my two friends mentioned above, Ranji and the Maharajah Gaikwar of Baroda.

Inchcape, with his great ability and his varied experiences in a long life, was a most interesting companion, but more than that, from a social point of view, he was the life and soul of the passengers, and entered into all their amusements.

After we had passed Alexandria, the Aga Khan and Ranji, who were close friends, were our most constant companions, and my wife and I lunched and dined with them most days. One felt as if one were in the company of two able and cultured Englishmen. I had many long discussions with them on Indian political affairs, and soon came to understand what I had often heard about the Aga Khan being a considerable power behind the scenes in European politics.

In Calcutta I had several interviews of interest, and sometimes amusing, with wealthy Hindus, for whom I was or had been concerned in Appeals to the Privy Council.

An old acquaintance of mine who was in Calcutta at this time was that charming great and clever friend of Indian women, Miss Cornelia Sorabji. I first knew her in my undergraduate days when she was working at Oxford: she was a frequent guest of Jowett (the Master of Balliol) and a regular attendant at the Balliol Sunday Concerts: in later times I used to meet her at Westminster, where she was often a guest of Whitley when he was Speaker. She was a member of the Calcutta Bar, and had chambers in the same building as my firm's office, and frequently appeared in Court, generally without charge, to help poor Indians.

An extremely able and highly educated woman (she is still alive), she always struck me as combining in a remarkable way her original Indian mentality with a completely modern European mentality: I learnt much of India and Indians from her, and my wife had the wonderful experience of attending with her a Mahommedan wedding near Calcutta.

The Indian Congress was just assembling in Calcutta, and I was enabled to have an interview with the Pundit Nehru (the elder Nehru, now dead). I had met him a year or two before in the House of Commons, when he came to a meeting of the Empire Parliamentary Association, and addressed a meeting of members on Indian affairs: he was then in European clothes, but when he received me in Calcutta he looked a handsome and remarkable figure, clad in spotless creamy white robes from the cap on his head to the slippers on his feet. He talked a great deal, but mainly about the English Bar and Courts and such-like English matters, and about his son who was then in London reading for the Bar. My efforts to get him to talk about Indian affairs were not very successful: he told me he remembered meeting me in London, and I could not help thinking that his avoidance of any discussion on Indian matters was due to his remembering my having put a question to him at the Empire Parliamentary Association meeting which he had not managed to answer very successfully.

It was a happy fact for me that the Governor of Bengal at that time was my friend Stanley Jackson, who was very good to us: we attended a big dinner party and the State Ball at Government House, and also went and dined privately there one night, and I had a long talk with him in his study the day before I left Calcutta: he told me much about his work and some of the difficulties in it, and spoke of his great advantage in having the help of (as he described him) "the finest policeman in the world," Sir Charles Tegart, whom I met frequently at social parties in Calcutta.

Being in Calcutta on New Year's Day, I saw the Proclamation Parade on the Maidan, a great spectacle! But the immense crowd of natives all round that great open space brought vividly to my mind the way in which Britons and their position and prestige among the teeming millions of India are preserved in spite of their numerical inferiority and with only a mere handful of British troops and officials.

I left Calcutta on January 12th, returning to London by the

same route, and on the same ship, but my wife, not being obliged to return so soon, stayed behind.

There were not so many passengers as on the outward journey, but they included a number of officers going home on leave, one of whom was a General Nightingale, with whom I had been at school for a time, and had never seen since. It was, I think, at Aden that Sir Ronald and Lady Storrs came on board to return to England, and then it was, through them, that I discovered that among the third-class passengers was "Aircraftsman Shaw" (Lawrence of Arabia) : but he spent most of his time in his cabin, busily engaged on his translation of the *Odyssey*. Although Storrs knew him well, it was very difficult to get him out, and I only saw him once for a few minutes, when Storrs got him up on to our deck for tea.

We were to stay the whole day in Valetta Harbour at Malta. My great friend, Lord Strickland, was then Prime Minister of Malta, and had promised to come on board early and take me ashore and show me all he could, in a day, of the Island. Unfortunately for me he did not turn up and next day he sent me a wireless message of apology, explaining that it was the fault of his secretary who had made a mistake in the date, and whom he had "sacked" in consequence. I sent a reply in which I asked that the secretary might be pardoned and reinstated.

There was a little difficulty about my arranging this trip to India as the Christmas Recess would scarcely give me sufficient time to get to India and back ; but after consultation with the Chief Government Whip, arrangements were made to enable someone else to act as Deputy Chairman in my place during my absence, in the event of my not being back in England when Parliament reassembled.

There was much discussion between the Speaker, the Officers of the House and the Chief Government Whip and myself as to this. My first suggestion was that the House should be asked to pass a resolution empowering the Chairman to call upon any member of the Panel of Temporary Chairmen to act as Deputy Chairman whenever he wanted such assistance. But this, I was told, would never do, as it would be possible for the Chairman from time to time to enable several members to occupy the Speaker's Chair as a Deputy Speaker when the Speaker required to be relieved. It was ultimately settled that the best course would be to ask the House to appoint a single specified member of the Panel to act in my place as Deputy Chairman for a limited

time, in the event of my unavoidable absence, and the Officials of the House advised the Speaker that the King's consent would be required to such a resolution. No difficulty was made about this, and accordingly the House in due course passed the necessary resolution, authorizing Captain Bourne to act as Deputy Chairman in case of my unavoidable absence.

When I left England, the date for Parliament to reassemble had not been fixed, but there was good reason to believe that it was likely to be somewhat earlier that year than the usual date of about the second week in February ; therefore, when I got to Calcutta one of the first things I did was to try and make enquiries there as to what date had been fixed for the reassembly of Parliament ; but, rather to my surprise, I was quite unsuccessful. The English newspapers published in Calcutta did not know, nor did anyone at Government House : ultimately I had to cable back to England to find out the date ; the reply I got was that Parliament was to reassemble on January 22nd, which was some time before I could be back again in London, but fortunately having made the arrangement above mentioned this did not matter, and I felt able to stay my full fortnight and return by the " Rajputana " as I had arranged ; but I was a little surprised to find that British Authorities and the Press in Calcutta were so uninformed as to Parliamentary arrangements. I came to the conclusion that people in India were almost as ignorant of English politics and political affairs as people in England were of Indian affairs !

CHAPTER XVII

SOME MINOR INCIDENTS IN THE CHAIR

EVERYONE who has presided in the House of Commons, and indeed everyone who has been for long a member of the House, must recollect a number of small incidents of a more or less interesting or amusing nature which the occupant of the Chair has had to deal with.

Many will remember a West African potentate who visited London some years ago, and was in the habit of going about in picturesque State garments wearing his gold crown. One night when I was deputizing for the Speaker, I was warned that he was in the lobby wearing his crown as usual and was coming in to the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery, and that I should be asked whether it was permissible for a ruling sovereign to be in the gallery of the House wearing his crown! I sent one of the messengers to tell this to the Serjeant-at-Arms: he dealt with the matter tactfully and successfully with the result that when the royal visitor entered the gallery, he took off his crown and placed it by his side on the bench. This was, no doubt, disappointing to the member intending to raise the point, but it was a relief to me, and prevented what might have been regarded by the distinguished stranger as an insult.

A "visitor" of a different type was a non-member of the House who actually sat for at least five minutes on one of the members' benches. It was at about 9 p.m. in a not very full House that I noticed a face which was strange to me and on enquiring I found that none of the clerks at the Table nor the messenger behind the Chair recognized him as a member. I therefore sent and requested the Serjeant-at-Arms to ask the gentleman his name: but directly the stranger saw the Serjeant's messenger coming towards him he left his seat and climbed over the railing into the strangers' seats, known as the seats under the gallery: he apologized to the messenger and said he had an under-the-gallery ticket but thought he could hear better on the members' benches, so he had climbed over the railing: this was reported to me, but I directed that he should be made to leave the precincts of the House, and he went without causing any trouble.

It has been said that a member has often failed to get called to address the House because the Speaker or Chairman did not

know his name. One afternoon in the smoking-room some of my friends were chaffing me on this subject and I had replied that it was a gross slander. The next day when the House was in Committee, a new member, whom I did not know by sight, rose to speak and I wished to call him; but neither I nor either of the clerks at the Table, nor anyone on the front bench, knew his name. I therefore rose from the Chair and looking straight at him said, "Will the honourable member please tell me his name": he replied "Nunn." Amid general laughter I think I was the only one to preserve a serious face as I solemnly called—"Mr. Nunn."

It is an old rule that no "lethal weapon" may be brought into the House: therefore when an officer comes into the House in uniform, as often happened before the War when some official function had been taking place, or an Address in reply to a King's Speech was to be moved or seconded by an officer in uniform, he had to take off his sword and leave it outside. The sword had ceased to be worn except with full dress uniform before 1918, so that the many members then still serving and appearing in the House in khaki uniform had no sword to discard: but my attention was drawn as on a point of order one day in 1942 during a debate to the fact that a member in uniform was apparently equipped with a revolver: he was certainly carrying a holster on his belt with a cord attached to something in it, assumed to be a revolver: fortunately instead of jumping to a conclusion, I asked the honourable member what was in the holster, and he at once drew from it a large handkerchief or scarf, and attached to the cord nothing more dangerous than a whistle!

One night, during a debate on a riot in Hyde Park, a member was speaking of some rioters having torn up the railings and he drew out from under his seat a heavy iron spike which he alleged had been taken from one of the rioters: I said that by his own speech he had described it as a murderous weapon and requested him to take it out immediately: incidentally, his doing so would have terminated a speech which some members thought had been long enough but he avoided that by getting a colleague to take the murderous weapon out for him.

In earlier times when it was the custom of gentlemen to wear swords, members were presumably permitted to wear them in the House; for the tradition is that the broad red lines on the carpet in front of the front benches were to keep members from getting within a sword's reach of their political opponents on the other side of the House: consequently a member speaking from a front

bench is out of order if he steps beyond the red line. A new member who was making his maiden speech (incidentally a very good one) from the front bench below the gangway, when I was in the Chair, frequently transgressed this rule : my attention was drawn to it by various members whom I quieted by remarking " maiden speech " and refrained from interrupting him. As is well known, it is a recognized custom to treat a member making his maiden speech with special courtesy and forbearance. When the member had finished his speech and resumed his seat, before calling on the next speaker, I rose and informed the honourable member that had it not been customary to show special consideration to a member making his maiden speech, he would have been called to order for stepping beyond the red line, and explained the origin of the rule—which it afterwards appeared was unknown to several older members in the House, though most of them knew it.

Divisions have sometimes led to curious incidents, and twice I had to declare a division void and have it taken again. Four minutes is allowed for members to get into the voting lobbies between the " second call " and the order to lock the doors, after which members cannot get in to vote : the time, formerly and still in the House of Lords, measured by a sand-glass, is now measured by a clockwork instrument on the table : the Chairman when the House is in Committee, or the Clerk when the Speaker or Deputy Speaker is presiding, starts the instrument (called the clock), by pressing a button, and at the end of the four minutes a very small bell strikes and the dial hand stops. A division was in progress and just after I had given the order to lock the doors, it was reported to me that a large number of members wishing to vote had been locked out, as the order had been given long before the four minutes expired : as this was obviously true, and the exclusion of these members was not their fault, but the fault of the Chairman or the clock (and naturally I blamed the clock !), the only proper course was to stop the division and take it over again, which I did : the explanation was that the starting button was not working well and when I had pressed the button, the clock had not started to work : when I looked at the clock and saw that it had apparently recorded four minutes, whereas in fact it had never started, I thought the four minutes had expired and that I must have missed hearing the bell, and therefore ordered the doors to be locked.

Another time, while a division was in progress and the tellers were, or should have been, at their places counting the votes,

I saw one of the four tellers sitting in the Chamber: when the tellers appeared before the Table, I observed that one of them was not one of the four I had named: I therefore drew attention to this, refused to let them report the numbers and ordered the division to be called afresh: it turned out that one of the tellers who had never acted as a teller before had been seized with a fright that he might make a mistake, and he had therefore asked another member in the course of the division to take his place.

A similar incident had occurred and been dealt with in the same way by my predecessor, James Hope (now Lord Rankeillour), when he was Chairman.

As is well known the Speaker, or Chairman, does not vote in a division, but if the votes are equal, has a casting vote: this seldom happens and I never had to give a casting vote: but on several occasions it was apparent that the voting would be very close, and I have had to consider whether to vote aye or no if I had to give a casting vote: a casting vote is not given according to one's personal views, but in accordance with certain principles, the application of which is not always easy to decide. The rough-and-ready basic rules about it are that a casting vote should be so given as to leave the question open for further consideration, or so as to effect no change. On the other hand, voting instead of being very close, may result in an overwhelming majority, and I well remember an occasion when the tellers in one lobby had no votes to count: on another occasion the tellers for the "Noes" had only one vote to report and in announcing the result, in order to be grammatical, instead of announcing the Ayes were so many and the Noes were so many, I had to announce the Ayes were so many and the No was one! A rule of the House which is not always known to all members is that on a question being put, a member's voice governs his vote. Sometimes in order to force a division or for some other reason a member will shout aye or no when the question is put from the Chair, and then vote in the opposite sense in the lobby: in such a case, the occupant of the Chair, if satisfied, from his own observation or other reliable evidence, that a member has voted in the lobby contrary to his oral vote, directs the member's vote to be transferred on the division list, so as to accord with his oral vote before the division: I have myself had to do this: it must be done before the figures are announced from the Chair.

On one occasion a member who desired, on account of age, to retire, followed the usual course of being appointed Steward of the

Chiltern Hundreds, which had to be announced from the Chair of the House : on the day this was to be done, the member, thinking he would like to hear it, walked in and took his ordinary place in the House, not realizing that the appointment having been in fact made, he would render himself liable to a heavy fine : fortunately for him, some of his friends quickly hustled him out before the announcement was made !

A few years ago Mr. Speaker FitzRoy, after consultation with the Clerk of the House and others at the suggestion of a number of members, introduced with general approval the practice followed ever since, of announcing from the Chair before the commencement of business, the death of any member of the House which had been made known to him since the previous sitting. It had not been usual for any reference to be made to the death of a member except in the case of some very distinguished member in regard to whom it was felt proper for special tributes to be paid by the Leader of the House and representatives of other parties. There was a general feeling that it was not very seemly that members should take no official cognizance of the death of one of their colleagues. The Speaker therefore now, in such cases, states that he has to inform the House of the death of such and such a member, and to express the sympathy of the House with his relatives and friends.

Sometimes the Chamber may get inconveniently dark owing to fading daylight or because of fog or sudden cloud : or after lights are on, the lighting system may break down. In such a case some member will probably rise and take the time-honoured course of moving " that candles be brought in." Such a motion is never put from the Chair, as the Speaker or Chairman assumes that it has general assent and acts accordingly by giving instructions to a messenger to do what is necessary. A temporary breakdown in the lighting system is usually very quickly remedied : but I remember one occasion when the House was in Committee and the lights failed and I had to have the candles motion literally complied with, and lighted candles were brought in : there were only a very few of them, as all that was really necessary was to have a few on the Table of the House, and it was not long before the trouble was rectified and the candles no longer needed.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER 1931

THE Statute of Westminster 1931 is regarded by many (and rightly so) as one of the most important Acts of Parliament of recent times. But it is also one of the most peculiar: its importance does not lie in its literal provisions but rather in its implications, and in the fact that it marks and gives official and statutory recognition to a stage in the progress and development of the British Empire: in form it repeals a number of statutory provisions which had in fact already become obsolete or ineffective for practical purposes: in fact it marks the establishment of the British Commonwealth of Nations as an integral part of the British Empire, besides relieving the self-governing Dominions from a variety of ties or restrictions on their freedom and independence which had become more irritating than effective. It does not specifically, or in terms, set up the constitution of or even purport to constitute the British Commonwealth of Nations: indeed the constitution of that great organization could not be precisely set out in an Act of Parliament any more than could the British Constitution: both these constitutions "grew" and were not made; they were evolved through the needs and by the character of the British people. Roughly, one-fourth of the Statute consists of the preamble, and it is there that we find, used I believe for the first time, officially, the title or name "British Commonwealth of Nations." It should be explained, as apparently many people do not know it, that "the British Commonwealth of Nations" is not a substitute for, or an alternative to, or merely another name for the British Empire. The British Empire which includes the Colonies and all lands under the British Crown is a larger entity of which the British Commonwealth of Nations, consisting only of the United Kingdom and the self-governing Dominions, is a part. The Dominions (formerly Colonies) as existing in 1931 are named in the Statute: they are those six self-governing countries which already had their own Parliaments and had in fact established their independence as fully grown members of a family of nations, united by allegiance to a common Sovereign and by those ties of sentiment, of common interests, and of a common ancestry, which have so often shown themselves stronger and more binding than any written words in Statutes

or Treaties. The six Dominions are Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland, and Southern Ireland.

Another notable feature of this important Statute is that, judged by the ordinary standards of Acts of Parliament, it is anything but good legislation: it is obscure, imperfect in its provisions, and capable of giving rise to many complex and difficult problems: yet these faults may almost be regarded as virtues: for any serious attempt to set out in an Act of Parliament the precise rights and duties or obligations of the several members of the Commonwealth would have been to attempt the impossible and merely to impede the growth and development which had already advanced so far, but had still to go further.

One of the difficulties attendant on the Bill was the fact that it could not be complete without the concurrence or approval, either previously or subsequently, and either expressed or implied, of all the Dominions: to what extent that concurrence or approval had already been or has since been given cannot be definitely stated: any attempt to do so would only result in stirring up and bringing to light some of the complex problems inherent in the Bill: but the Bill was introduced at the request of the Dominions in accordance with a promise made to them, as a Bill for the purpose of implementing resolutions and declarations agreed to at an Imperial Conference.

All this must read like a legislator's nightmare and a mass of inconsistencies and contradictions: but from the point of view of a careful architect of legislation this is just a correct description of the Bill.

Having thus tried, however inadequately, to give some description of the remarkable nature of this Act of Parliament let me turn to what is more properly my task, a description of the passage of the Bill through the House of Commons—almost as remarkable and unusual as the Statute itself.

On the 10th November, 1931, the King opened the first session of a newly elected Parliament, elected at a strenuously fought General Election, following on the financial crisis which had led to a split in the Labour Government: there followed the formation of a National Government, composed of members of all three parties in which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald remained Prime Minister. The General Election had been fought mainly on financial and economic issues, and I doubt whether any candidate in his Election Address or in his electoral campaign had made much, if any,

reference to the measure which was referred to in the King's Speech at the Opening of Parliament in the following paragraph :

In conformity with the undertaking given to the Representatives of My Dominions in 1930 a measure will be laid before you to give statutory effect to certain of the Declarations and Resolutions of the Imperial Conferences of 1926 and 1930 and to promote the spirit of free co-operation amongst members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Two days later, on November 12th, the Bill was formally introduced : and it ultimately received the Royal Assent on the 11th December and thus came into operation on that date. That, indeed, was fairly quick work for a Bill of this nature ! This Bill occupied one and a half Parliamentary days in its passage through the House of Commons, and the Act takes up less than four pages of the official Volume of Statutes : the Government of India Bill of 1935, on the other hand, occupied forty full Parliamentary days, and the Act takes up 430 pages of the Volume of Statutes !

The second reading of the Bill was taken on Friday, November 20th, and having been debated all that day (a Friday being regarded as half a normal Parliamentary day) was passed without a division : on the following Tuesday, 24th, the Committee stage was completed and the Bill read a third time, again without a division. But this is not to say that the Bill met with any large measure of complete approval ; rather the contrary : my impression was that very few members took any interest in the Bill, and many had not read it : they understood that it was non-controversial and consequently thought it was of no importance : undoubtedly many were mystified by the title, and thought it dealt only with certain technical matters. On the other hand, a few were quite violently opposed to it, regarding it as a definite step in the disruption of the British Empire : many more were seriously and severely critical of it : the lack of interest was no doubt due in some degree to the fact of its being the early days of a new Parliament with many new members : members' minds were full of matters which had been the chief issues at the election and this Bill was not among them.

The second reading was moved by the Dominions Secretary (Mr. J. H. Thomas) : he was followed by Sir Stafford Cripps, who expressed the support of the Opposition. Then followed a speech by Mr. Churchill, well described by Mr. Amery, who spoke next, as " One of the most powerful and most impressive speeches which has been delivered in this House for a long time " : though severely critical of the Bill in various respects and pleading for

some delay and further consideration, he said that he—and many of his friends—would not be prepared to vote against the principle of the measure in its second reading stage. Much of his criticism, like that of many others, centred round the position of the Irish Free State, the Dominion which has so often appeared in the character of “the difficult child of the family”: he gave notice that in the Committee stage an amendment would be moved by Colonel Gretton to insert words to safeguard the Irish Free State Constitution Act 1922. There was clearly considerable support for the views he expressed regarding the Irish Free State, especially of course from the Northern Irish Members, and before the debate ended Mr. Thomas promised that every consideration would be given to all that had been said and that the Government would be asked to consider the whole situation in the light of the debate that had taken place: in view of that statement a motion which had been moved for rejection of the Bill was withdrawn, and as already stated the second reading was carried without a division.

In course of the debate an interesting criticism of a very different kind was made by that learned historian Sir Charles Oman, who objected to the title on the ground that there was already a Statute of Westminster passed in the year 1275 and that this Bill had nothing to do with anything in that Act: that Act, he said, dealt with many things including “the hospitality of Monks, officials of the Crown who wrongly extort money from the King’s lieges, lawyers in the service of the King who pervert the truth in Court and with heirs who marry without the permission of their guardians,” but has nothing to do with the Dominions!

The real issue between the critics and the Government was whether the freedom and independence intended to be given to the Dominions would or would not entitle a Dominion to break a treaty which it had entered into with the Government of the United Kingdom. The fairly obvious answer to this was that if one party to a treaty determined to break it, they would not be prevented from doing so by any provision in this Bill or indeed by any paper safeguards. That, of course, was not a complete answer to a contention that the terms of the Bill would give a Dominion the right to do so: but the Government coupled with it the argument that such an addition to the Bill as the critics desired would be inconsistent with the arrangements which had been come to, would be contrary to the spirit of goodwill which was the essence of the Bill, and calculated to be insulting and irritating to the Dominions. This view of the undesirable nature

of the suggested amendment was strongly urged in a letter written directly after the second reading debate by Mr. Cosgrave, President of the Irish Free State, to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister read that letter to the House when the amendment in question came to be debated. The Committee stage was taken in Committee of the whole House, in which I took the Chair, on the 24th November. Many amendments were put down and the important one above referred to, to safeguard the Irish Free State Constitution Act 1922, was put down in the form of a proposed new clause, and therefore came up for discussion after all the amendments to clauses had been disposed of. At the commencement of the Committee proceedings I was asked if I would give some indication as to the course I proposed to follow: I said I had no reason to rule any of the amendments out of order and that, while reserving my rights to take such course as I might think right as the debate proceeded, I was not intending to refuse to select any of the amendments: but many were consequential on others and some required slight alteration. Some half-dozen amendments to clauses were moved and debated: one was accepted by the Government as a drafting improvement, and agreed to: the remainder were either withdrawn or negatived without a division. We then came to the important new clause which was fully debated and was defeated on a division by 360 to 50. An amendment to the preamble was moved but was withdrawn after a brief debate: a few speeches were made on the third reading, which was carried without a division.

Thus the Bill, fully and sufficiently considered and discussed in one and a half Parliamentary days, passed through the Commons after only one division, in the Committee stage (which resulted in a large majority for the Government), without amendment except on one drafting point, and with scarcely any opposition to the main principle, the only thing that really mattered very much. In the House of Lords a necessary amendment was made striking out a provision that December 1st should be the date on which the Act was to come into force: that had been the intention, but as the Bill could not be passed before that date the provision in question was omitted by a Lords' amendment agreed to by the Commons. The Bill received the Royal Assent on December 11th.

So was placed on the Statute Book this remarkable Act which may be regarded among modern Acts of Parliament more as a curious and extremely valuable "museum piece" than as a workable piece of legal machinery.

Only four years later the British Commonwealth of Nations was faced with the serious crisis which resulted in the Abdication of the reigning monarch : the ties which according to the preamble to the Statute of Westminster 1931 bound that Commonwealth together stood the strain : the result may be said to have demonstrated both those outstanding features of the Statute of Westminster 1931, the strength of these ties and the complicated problems inherent in the form of the Act.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 1931 .

THE Second Labour Party Government of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald formed in June of 1929 came into office at a difficult time and under anything but easy circumstances : their existence in office depended upon the support—or at least benevolent neutrality—of the Liberal Party, and that support did not appear to be given in a very wholehearted way : trade depression and unemployment were increasing and there were already signs of financial difficulties ahead. In the next two years, things went from bad to worse, and by the beginning of 1931 the state of affairs was such as to cause great anxiety.

The most prominent figure in the critical drama of this year was Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer : a man of great knowledge and understanding of economic and financial matters, and of great ability, there were few men who were better qualified than he (apart from questions of policy and party politics) to hold that high office. He was too, an indefatigable worker, in spite of his indifferent health : in thinking of him and his public life, it should never be forgotten that he was handicapped in this way, and I believe it is a fact that he was seldom free from pain : this may well have been partly the cause of the bitterness of the attacks he sometimes made upon his opponents in his speeches : but he was personally, as I have some reason to know, of a very kindly disposition, and could be a charming person to deal with. Those who find fault with him or blame him for his share in the policy and conduct of the Government, of which he was a member from June 1929 to the end of July 1931, must not forget the debt which the country owes him for the courageous and valuable part which he took when the crisis of August 1931 arose, and the devoted and self-denying service which he then rendered. It is certainly difficult to understand his attitude in the first six or seven months of the year : but it must be borne in mind that he was, and had long been, a most loyal and devoted member of the Labour Party : unfortunately for him, a large number of his party in the House, and indeed of other parties also, were far from understanding the intricacies and difficulties of national finance, and he was quite unable to obtain the concurrence of many of his followers in his

views upon such matters. His loyalty to the interests of the country when the crisis came rose above his devotion to the cause of the Labour Party, and brought about a severance of his relations with them, which was a great grief to him.

Early in February the Conservatives moved a vote of Censure on the Government on account of their expenditure of public money. Snowden made a strong speech in defence of the Government, but the memorable part of the speech came at the end of it when he uttered a very serious warning to the House and to the country about the financial position; he described it as so grave as to require drastic and disagreeable measures. This warning gave considerable comfort to many in the House, and outside it, who, much as they disliked Snowden's politics, knew his great ability and hoped his warning foreshadowed a change of attitude in the Government on financial questions. About the same time the Liberal Party called for the setting up of a Committee to consider questions of economy: the Government consented to this, Snowden somewhat contemptuously observing that one more committee "would not do any harm." The result was the setting up on March the 17th of the May Economy Committee under the chairmanship of Sir George May, which ultimately reported in July just before Parliament adjourned for the recess.

Meanwhile, however, little other result appeared to follow from Snowden's grave warning in February: unemployment expenditure was growing and the Government was still borrowing large sums to meet the deficit on the Unemployment Fund. The City of London and people of all political shades of opinion who were well versed in financial matters had become seriously anxious and even alarmed. One of their difficulties was that they could not take active steps to make known the serious financial position without making it worse by publicity. I was in active work in the City at that time, and in touch with many financial people: consequently I knew better than many the dangers with which the country was faced and the intense anxiety of those who were experts on economic and financial matters. I remember telling my wife that I sometimes found it difficult to sleep at night through anxiety about the national financial position: I was by no means the only person who suffered in that way. Yet the Government gave one the impression of being blissfully ignorant of the danger, and Snowden's warnings in February seemed to have been forgotten even by himself, though we all knew he could not be ignorant of the position. I was then an ordinary back-

bench member of the Opposition : I had taken a fairly active part in debates on the Finance Bill and similar matters, so that Snowden was well accustomed to my interventions and had often replied to them : he had, in his Budget speech, foreshadowed a scheme for the taxation of land values in future years, and he brought in a Bill to set up the machinery and staff needed for the purpose : among other things this involved the engagement of a large number of land agents or surveyors at substantial expense and he had announced in the House his intention of engaging this staff at once. Having got into a little discussion with him in the debate one day, I made a very direct and earnest appeal to him to consider, in the interests of economy, postponing for a time the engagement of this expensive staff : I had succeeded in getting his attention when I made this appeal and asked him whether he would not give it careful consideration ; I used words somewhat as follows : “ The Right Honourable gentleman knowing, as we know he does, things which some of us, as he is aware, also know, will he not for the present postpone this heavy expenditure ? ” He was looking straight at me as I made this appeal, but he turned his head aside and would not make any reply at all. As I have already intimated, we could not refer to and explain these “ things ” more openly in debate for fear of still further damaging the already impaired credit of the country.

Another personal incident of these times remains in my mind : one day in July, when the Government had made known the date for adjournment for the autumn recess, until the 20th of October, my friend Guy Kindersley, then member for the Hitchin Division of Hertfordshire, met me at lunchtime in the City Club, and said to me, “ Don’t you think it mad, that knowing what may and almost certainly will happen in the next few weeks, we should be shutting up and going away for nearly two months.” I said I did, and he then suggested I should try to speak to Baldwin about it : but I replied no, why should he not go himself. He said, well if I do, will you come with me ? I agreed to do so, and we arranged to meet at the House when it assembled that afternoon. It had not then become, as it now has, the common practice, on an adjournment for any long period, to arrange for the House to reassemble in case of need, and there was no existing machinery for calling the House back before the date to which it should be adjourned ; but arrangements of that kind had been made at least once since the War, when Irish affairs made such a course advisable : it was an arrangement of that kind which we wanted

now. Kindersley and I met at the House as arranged, but he then told me he had found we need not trouble Baldwin, as he had learnt that the matter was already in train, and that Baldwin had either seen or arranged to see Snowden on the point. Anyhow, the necessary arrangements were made, fortunately, and in pursuance of them the House was recalled on September the 8th.

The House had adjourned on July the 31st, the day after the publication of the Report of the May Economy Committee, which estimated that the next Budget would show a deficiency of £120,000,000. Events then moved fast. In spite of the Bank of England having obtained credits from France and the United States at the beginning of August, a serious fall took place in the value of the English Pound Sterling, and in British Funds. The Bank was of course in close touch with the Government and also, to some extent at least, with Mr. Baldwin and other Conservative and Liberal Party leaders : the position was clearly alarming, and by the end of the second week in August, the Prime Minister was back in London, and within a few days the Cabinet was sitting to consider the situation.

I had to go to the south of Scotland early in August, and spent two days at the hotel at Turnberry, where I met my friend Lord Riddell, and then I went to stay with George Balfour, the member for Hampstead, at his house on Loch Garry, not far from Pitlochry and near to where Neville Chamberlain and his wife had a house ; so I managed to keep in touch with such news as was made known : but naturally I did not learn until afterwards all the details of the meetings and talks which were going on through those first three weeks of August : poor Neville Chamberlain had been looking forward to a month or so of fishing, but he did not get much of a holiday ! During the week I was at Loch Garry, I only saw him once for a few minutes : I met his wife several times, but he was in London most of the time, only coming back to Scotland now and then for one night. We knew that Ramsay MacDonald, backed up by Snowden, and with the help of the May Economy Committee, was doing his best to devise measures for meeting the crisis, and was in touch with Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, and Sir Herbert Samuel and other Opposition leaders who were trying to help him. Baldwin was at first abroad in France, but soon returned to London : we knew, too, that the Prime Minister was having great difficulties with his Cabinet and many of his own party.

I started home on Saturday the 22nd, and learned that the

King, who had been at Balmoral, was travelling back to London that night. Meanwhile the Prime Minister had found that he could not bring his followers into agreement with him, and it was generally understood that he had decided to resign. Under pressure, he agreed to remain in office with the help of Opposition leaders: during the Sunday and Monday (23rd and 24th) the Labour Government resigned, and was replaced by a National Government with MacDonald still Prime Minister, four Conservative leaders, Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare, and Cunliffe Lister joining the Cabinet, with, as Liberal leaders, Lord Reading and Sir Herbert Samuel. The Labour members of the Cabinet, in addition to the Prime Minister, were Snowden, James Thomas, and the Lord Chancellor—Lord Sankey: the only other members of the late Labour Government who supported the Prime Minister were Lord Amulree, Sir William Jowitt, and Mr. Gillett: the first two of these continued in their old posts as Secretary for Air and Attorney-General, while Gillett became Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Transport: the other Government offices had to be filled by Conservatives and Liberals.

The formation of the new Government, which at once got to work on Economy Measures and an emergency Budget, caused an immediate return of confidence in the City and also in financial centres abroad, and the danger of an immediate slump in sterling seemed to be stayed for the moment. The whole country had by this time been roused to a realization of the position. It was clear that a definite breach between the Prime Minister and most of his old Government had occurred: violent opposition to him and his new Government was shown by his late followers in the House and by the Leaders of the chief Labour Organizations in the country: but this only served to rouse more active support for the new Government. The general feeling was that the Labour Government had made a mess of things, and that if leaders of both the other great political parties were willing to help MacDonald and Snowden, and to serve under MacDonald, they must be right. The swing round among the wage-earning classes was brought home to me by an incident which occurred on my arrival at Watford from London after my visit to Scotland on the evening of August the 24th, when the fall of the Labour Government had just been made public. As I got out of the train, I was welcomed by the station-master and some of the uniformed railway staff, who said they were glad to see me back "in these stirring times":

at the side of the platform was a group of plate-layers or permanent way labourers, who were generally supposed to be Labour men, and supporters at elections of my Labour opponent : one of them, following the station-master's greeting to me, said, " Same here, sir, and thank God those — — —s are out," which was received with " hear-hears " from his companions.

Within a very few days of the formation of the new Government the hostility of Labour Organizations was made very clear : MacDonald and his few faithful adherents were violently attacked and subjected to expulsions from Labour bodies, demands that they should resign their seats, and so on : but confident in the support of their late political opponents and in the general approval and goodwill of the mass of the people, they went ahead with their plans which were ready for submission to Parliament when it met again on the emergency summons on the 8th of September.

At, or soon after noon on that day, in my office in the City, I received a telephone message from Eyres-Monsell, the Chief Whip, who enquired whether I should be present when the House met. I said, " Certainly, but why do you ask ? " He replied, " Well, you've got to be Chairman, and that will be done directly we meet." I said, " What has happened, isn't Young going on ? " — " No," he said, " we assumed he and Dunnico would retain their offices, but they refuse to do so, and only told us so this morning." This put me in some difficulty as my partners had gone away for their holidays, leaving me in charge of the business, and neither they nor I had ever contemplated my taking this position, which was bound to interfere seriously with my work in my firm's business : but I felt that in the circumstances I had no choice but to accept the office, at least for the time being, till the General Election, which I realized must come very soon.

The meeting of the House of Commons on the 8th September, 1931, was a memorable historical event. It will be remembered that on July 31st the House had risen for the autumn recess, which was to continue till November subject to the possibility of being recalled if circumstances should at any time require : the financial condition of the country was then such that many of us realized that such a recall was certain to be necessary in a few weeks, and the summons to meet on September 8th was issued on September 2nd.

When we dispersed on 31st July a Labour Government was in office : in the intervening five or six weeks a new Government had

been formed under the same Labour Prime Minister, but containing only five members of the Labour Party, the remainder being mainly Conservatives with a few Liberals, and the country had been—and still was—on the brink of financial disaster.

I shall never forget the scene when the House met on that day at the usual hour, 2.45 p.m. The Chamber was crowded : there on the Government bench was the same Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, with his same Chancellor of the Exchequer, Snowden : but his colleagues were leaders of the Conservative Party—Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, and others, and the Liberal leader Herbert Samuel ; and the back benches on the Government side were filled with Conservatives. Practically the whole of the Labour members who had been accustomed to sitting on the Government side were now ranged on the Opposition benches, with Arthur Henderson as their leader, and other members of the late Government occupying the front Opposition bench opposite to their old leaders, MacDonald and Snowden, and their new colleagues. There was a general atmosphere of excited tension : the Labour members bitterly hostile to the Government looked angry and determined : Henderson sat with arms folded and his face unusually red, glaring at his late chief opposite to him, looking as if he were very conscious both of the importance and the responsibility of his new position as Leader of the Opposition. The issue before the House—though in what form it was to be decided was as yet not clear—was, whether or not the newly formed Government had the confidence of the House, and the support of a sufficient majority of the members, to carry on in the present Parliament. Should the Government fail to obtain such a sufficient majority an immediate appeal to the country seemed inevitable, though the effect of a General Election at the moment might well intensify the financial danger to the country. No one could feel certain what would be the result of the coming debate : the Government was assured of the support of the vast majority of the Conservative members : it was equally certain that it would be opposed by the bulk of the Labour members : but it was uncertain how many (or perhaps it should be said how few) of them might decide to support the Prime Minister, and although the leaders of the Liberal Party had joined the Government, it was uncertain whether the entire party would follow them.

Prayers being over, a couple of private notice questions of no great interest, and some supplementary questions, were disposed of in an impatient House. But then came a further delay in

dealing with the great issue. The Speaker read to the House a letter from Sir Robert Young resigning his office as Chairman of Ways and Means, consequent upon an expression of opinion by his Trade Union Executive that he should do so, and a letter from Mr. Dunnico also, resigning his office as Deputy Chairman: the Prime Minister immediately moved that I be the Chairman of Ways and Means, which was received with angry shouts of "No" from the Labour benches. An attempt made by members on the Government side to raise a question as to these resignations having been brought about through dictation from outside bodies was cut short by the Speaker putting the Prime Minister's motion to the House: again there were angry shouts of No from the Labour members who were apparently intending to divide, but the division was not pressed and I was elected.

Then in a somewhat noisy House, comparative silence ensued when the Prime Minister appeared at the Bar and announced a message from the King: he brought the message to the Table in the customary way: the House as always listened in respectful silence while the King's message was read to the House by the Speaker: it was quite brief, merely stating that the condition of the National Finances, in the opinion of Ministers, called for additional taxation and economies, and that His Majesty recommended the matter to the consideration of the House of Commons. Henderson then addressed certain questions to the Prime Minister and to the Speaker as to how the King's message was to be dealt with, and what was proposed regarding the course of the day's business. The Speaker, in his reply, indicated the different methods which might be adopted in dealing with a Royal message, and said he proposed in the present case to treat the intended motion by the Prime Minister for setting up the Committee of Ways and Means as a reply to the message, and would allow a wide discussion on that motion of the whole situation. Thus, the way was made clear for the debate, which was clearly to be in the nature of a vote of confidence in the Government, and to decide the great issue. While all this was going on, the House was again noisy, with frequent angry and provocative interruptions from the Labour members, which sometimes produced equally disorderly replies from Government supporters. The Prime Minister rose to propose the setting up of the Committee of Ways and Means; he was subjected to similar interruptions, as were subsequent speakers also, and the Speaker had to appeal to the House to allow both the Prime Minister and Henderson (who

followed him in reply) to make their speeches. The debate, which was marked throughout by bitter hostility on the part of the Labour members and by repeated outbreaks of similar disorderly interruptions, continued till 11 p.m., when the division was taken in scenes of great excitement. When the tellers appeared at the Table with the Government tellers on the right indicating that the Government had a majority, tremendous cheering arose from the Government benches for a few seconds, but it soon subsided by reason of the anxiety to hear the figures : merely carrying the motion was not enough : was the majority sufficient to enable the Government to carry on in the existing House ? It was, and the announcement of the figures was greeted with wild and sustained cheers, and counter-jeers from the Opposition, in the midst of which the House adjourned.

The figures showed a majority of 60 for the new Government, no less than 562 members (including tellers) taking part out of a possible total of 613 : allowing for members incapacitated by illness, or who had gone abroad for the recess, this was a remarkably large division, and showed an undoubted majority in the existing House for the new Government.

One of those who took part in the debate as an unofficial back-bench member was Mr. Churchill : he spoke from the seat which I had usually regarded as mine, the corner seat above the gangway on the second bench from the back (now of course on the Government side) : before the change of Government it was the corresponding seat on the Opposition side, of course, which I had usually occupied : knowing that I was probably to be elected Chairman, Churchill had, before the sitting, asked me to give him, so far as I could do so, the reversion to my seat, to which I had readily assented, and directly I moved out after being elected, he took the seat. He had, when in opposition as an ex-Cabinet Minister, sat on the front Opposition bench, but as a supporter of but not a member of the Government, he was now anxious to find a good vantage place on the Government back benches. He commenced his speech with some delightfully humorous remarks about its being a long time since he had had to speak without the assistance of the box at the Table : he said he felt inclined to claim the indulgence usually accorded to a maiden speech, and that speaking " from the dizzy heights of the back bench " he did not quite know whether he had gone up or down. His whole speech was punctuated by humour and was rather a relief, in what was generally a not very good-tempered debate. Churchill did

not find "the dizzy heights of the back bench" very congenial, and soon took to the front bench below the gangway, where he usually sat from this time onwards until he returned to office on the outbreak of war.

On the evening of that first day of the reassembly of Parliament, there was some trouble in the vicinity of the House, between the crowd and the police. Among the all-round "cuts" included in the Government's economy proposals was a cut in unemployment benefit: this was, not unnaturally, seized upon by the Labour Opposition as a method of fomenting hostility to the Government, and the police, anticipating a demonstration by unemployed, had a number of extra police in reserve in and about the Houses of Parliament. Just at this time, experimental methods of floodlighting were being tested by floodlighting some of the principal buildings in London, including the Houses of Parliament, and this led to great crowds of people being out in the streets soon after dark every evening to see the effect: there was, too, as anticipated, a large crowd of demonstrators organized to protest against the "cuts": the sightseers and demonstrators together formed such a large crowd as to cause an obstruction to persons passing to and from the House; a large force of police, including some mounted men, therefore pushed back the crowd and made an attempt to separate the demonstrators from the sightseers. A certain number of people were injured in the scuffle and there were a few arrests: the matter was the subject of some debate in the House the following night: it was raised by a Conservative Mr. (later Sir) Oliver Simmons, whose chief complaint appeared to be that the force of police employed was greater than was required, and consequently provocative; but he pleaded for the unemployed as a whole, that because of the hardships they had to undergo, they should be treated with as much leniency as possible: the rest of the debate was carried on entirely by Labour members, some of whom appeared to welcome the opportunity to attack the Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Samuel, who answered for the Government: it was ended by the arrival of the time at which the sitting had to be concluded.

Proceedings on the following day were of comparatively little interest or importance: there were no questions except one by private notice of no general interest: the first business was a motion by Baldwin relating to business of the House, which provided for the Government taking the whole time of the House for the remainder of the session: the discussion on this seemed

rather like a continuation of the previous day's debate, and at times there was again a certain amount of interruption : both the Speaker and I, when relieving him as Deputy Speaker, had some trouble in stopping members from making speeches which were irrelevant to the actual motion. After some two hours' debate, the Government moved the Closure (a motion that the question be now put, and thus a method of ending the debate), which was carried by a majority of over 90, and Baldwin's motion was then carried on a division by nearly the same majority : later the House went into committee on the Public Works Loans Bill (second reading of which had been carried before the recess) which again gave members some opportunity of discussing matters concerned with the financial situation : a division took place in which the Government majority was about 100. A debate on the adjournment regarding the disturbances outside the House on the previous night concluded the day's sitting.

It was now clear that the Government had a working majority in the existing House of between 50 and 100, and there was no need for anxiety on that head.

On the following day, Thursday, September the 10th, Snowden introduced his emergency Budget : this was the first of fourteen successive Budgets for which I was in the Chair. Enough was already known of the Chancellor's intentions to prevent the usual excitement and curiosity about the taxation proposals. He estimated a deficiency at the end of that year of nearly £75,000,000, and at the end of the next year of £170,000,000. At the end of the sitting the requisite Budget Resolutions were carried without a division, with the exception of one which, according to the customary practice, was left over to enable the general debate on the Budget to be continued. The debate was continued and concluded on the following Tuesday, the 15th. Briefly, the new taxation imposed by the Budget was an increase in Income Tax and Super-tax with a reduction of Income Tax reliefs, and increased taxes on beer, tobacco, petrol, and entertainment tax.

On the Budget day the Chancellor also issued a memorandum setting out the "cuts" in salaries and other payments proposed by the Government for reducing expenditure. These included reductions of from 10 to 20 per cent. in all salaries paid by Government, such as those paid to Cabinet Ministers and other members of the Government, Judges and school teachers, and in the allowances of Members of Parliament, the remuneration of

Health Insurance doctors and chemists, the wages of the Police, and the pay and pensions of the Navy and Army : unemployment relief and insurance benefit were to be similarly reduced and all the contributions to the unemployment fund (from the Exchequer, the employers, and the employed) were to be increased. There were still persons who would be left unaffected by these reductions, which were to be made by Act of Parliament ; such, for example, as the Speaker, the Chairman, and Deputy Chairman of the House of Commons, whose salaries were paid by the House of Commons and not by the Government, and certain special Judges paid by Corporations, or otherwise not by the Government. All these people were to be "invited" to agree voluntarily to similar reductions : to the best of my knowledge and belief, not one of these people refused.

Before the meeting of Parliament, the King had offered to make a £50,000 reduction in his Civil List and the Prince of Wales offered a contribution of £10,000 from the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall : these two offers and their acceptance were announced by the Prime Minister.

Voluntary contributions of various kinds poured in to the Exchequer daily from all classes of people : if the total amount of these was comparatively not very great, they showed the spirit of the people. On the other hand the jeers from some Labour members which interrupted much of Snowden's Budget speech, including his reference to the voluntary contributions, and the sporadic outbreaks which took place among the unemployed and others affected by the "cuts," clearly showed the bitterness of the small opposition. But all this only served to increase the support of the Government by the country as a whole, which was soon placed beyond all doubt by the General Election in the following month of October, when out of 614 elected members, 558 were elected as supporters of the National Government, ten to one.

The Prime Minister and his colleagues had a busy time between the reassembly of Parliament and its dissolution on October the 7th. They had found themselves with a sufficient working majority in the House, and they fairly soon completed the Budget and the National Economy Bill, although the latter caused them a little trouble and was opposed by the Labour Party to the utmost of their power : much more remained to be done in Parliament to close up its work before dissolution, and then the banking position gave them further trouble ; partly, no doubt, this was owing to the disturbances brought about among

the unemployed and others affected by the economy cuts, which interfered with the restoration of confidence. On Sunday, the 20th of September, it was announced that the Government found it necessary to suspend the Gold Standard and that it was proposed to pass the necessary Bill through all stages the following day : the rather exciting passage of that Bill will be described later on. But closing up the work of the House was not the Prime Minister's only, or most difficult task at this time. He had to deal with the problem of being the head of a National Government formed hurriedly to meet an emergency, and composed of men holding widely different views on many matters and especially on questions relating to trade and tariffs, which were bound to crop up in the further financial measures which would have to be undertaken. The immediate danger of the financial crisis had been averted : but the task of reconstructing the financial condition of the country was far from complete. Was he to carry on for a time with the present Government and Parliament, or was he to decide on an immediate election, and if so what was to be the programme to be put before the country ? To attempt to carry on with the present Government and the existing Parliament was fraught with many dangers, and was regarded by most of the leading members of the Government and their followers as unwise—indeed in some quarters it was openly stated that to do so would be dishonest and unfair to the country. The Government decided that they must dissolve Parliament : but how they could appeal to the country as a united body was difficult to see. The Liberals were not only far from being in sympathy with the Conservatives, they were not united among themselves. Mr. Lloyd George was believed to be definitely opposed to an immediate election : he had been ill and was still confined to his house at Churt, and had to be visited there by those who wished to see him : but he remained a force that had to be reckoned with, so he had many callers to see him. For many days attempts were made to find a "formula" which would present an appearance of unity : conferences and talks were incessant, and leading politicians together or separately visited Lloyd George at Churt daily. Many picturesque and amusing stories were going about regarding these visits to Churt, and the search for a formula : no doubt these stories were largely imaginary, but many of them had a substratum of truth. The air was thick with stories of compromises, agreements, disagreements, and temporary expedients.

Then, Sir John Simon, a Liberal, not a member of the Govern-

ment, brought a refreshing breeze into the political atmosphere. Adopting an attitude of common sense, he declared that this formula-hunting had gone on long enough : he formed what was called the " Simonite " group of Liberals whose policy was stated simply and clearly as " Support the Prime Minister." This was, in effect, the course to which the Government was driven : they decided to appeal to the country for what was called a " Doctor's Mandate," in other words, to ask the electorate for a free hand to do as they thought best. This just suited, at that moment, the feelings of the man-in-the-street : he did not want to have to worry about intricate financial problems, if he could trust experts to deal with them : he was sure the Labour Party had got the country into a mess : he was persuaded that the National Government had so far saved the country ; some members of that Government were leaders of the party (if any) to which he belonged. His view therefore was " this Government has stopped the rot, send them back to finish the job."

The appeal, as already stated, was completely successful, resulting in a ten to one majority for the Government, composed of Conservatives (forming over two-thirds of the House), Liberals, National (or Simonite) Liberals, and National Labour members. The Opposition was composed of 52 Labour members and Mr. Lloyd George's family group of four Liberals. Even this, however, did not alter the fact that the Government were not in all respects a united body : the time came before long when this fact became very clear : but they were united in their main objective, if not upon the steps to attain it : thus, in the new Parliament, came the remarkable " agreement to differ " when Sir Herbert Samuel, at variance with his colleagues in the Government upon an important issue, remained—and was permitted to remain—a member of the Government and of the Cabinet. The " doctors," all anxious for their patients' recovery, differed as to the right treatment, but the treatment of the patient prescribed by the majority was carried out.

CHAPTER XX

THE GOLD STANDARD (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1931

THE necessity which arose in the middle of September 1931 of suspending the Gold Standard (which has already been briefly mentioned) was something of a crisis within a crisis, arising as it did about a week after the introduction of the emergency Budget. Had this suspension not been promptly effected, all the Government's efforts to deal with the desperate financial position would have been in vain and complete collapse of the country's financial position would have occurred.

The passing into law of the necessary Gold Standard (Amendment) Act 1931, in a single day, without previous notice in Parliament, and only one day's notice (and that a Sunday) in the Press is a remarkable example of prompt and speedy action by Parliament in a sudden emergency. Incidentally the proceedings provide a warning to Governments of the necessity of taking every proper precaution against the happening of the unexpected in the House of Commons: the failure to do so on this occasion resulted in a race against the clock between 10 and 11 p.m. which was more exciting than dignified.

On Sunday, the 20th of September, 1931, the Sunday papers announced that the Government had decided to suspend the Gold Standard, and that it was intended to pass the short Bill necessary for this purpose through all stages on the following day, Monday the 21st: this intention was of course prominently published in the daily papers, also on the Monday morning.

It is not necessary here to go into technical details about our monetary system or the Gold Standard: all that needs to be written here can be told quite simply.

The Bill consisted of one operative clause, made up of three sub-clauses: sub-clause (1) suspended sub-section (2) of section I of the Gold Standard Act of 1925 which obliged the Bank of England to sell gold on demand, at £3 17s. 10d. per oz. troy (less than half its then world-market value): sub-clause (2) relieved the Bank from all liability for any contravention of that sub-section, as from the previous Friday the 18th, and sub-clause (3) empowered the Treasury to make such Orders as should be expedient for meeting difficulties in connection with the suspension of the Gold Standard.

The Bill was thus both short and simple. Moreover, the need for it was not a matter on which there could be any doubt, so that no opposition was to be feared from any responsible quarter. The Government hoped, therefore (not unreasonably), that the House of Commons might pass it through all stages by about dinner-time, and arrangements were made for the House of Lords to remain in session until it was sent up to them, and for a Royal Commission directly after, for giving the Royal Assent. But the Government had failed to take one precaution: *they had not suspended the 11 o'clock rule* to enable proceedings on the Bill in the Commons to be continued if necessary after 11 p.m., and this very nearly caused the necessity of carrying the Bill over until the following day with disastrous results.

The correct procedure for bringing in a Bill without notice and passing it at once through all stages was duly followed. It involved a motion "Asking leave" to introduce the Bill and to pass it through all stages: this was done by Snowden the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a frank and lucid speech in which he set out fully the provisions of the Bill and the need for it: he read to the House the letter which the Bank of England had sent to the Government on the previous Friday, stating the urgent necessity of this step and the Government's reply acceding to the Bank's request, and promising to ask Parliament to indemnify the Bank from liability in the meanwhile, in respect of any contravention of sub-section (2) of section I of the Act of 1925 since Friday the 18th.

Arthur Henderson as leader of the Opposition followed with a long and carefully prepared speech in which, though critical of the Government for their previous policy, he recognized the necessity for the Bill, but asked several questions which he wished to have answered by the Financial Secretary when he came to reply. Following him came speeches from E. F. Wise, Wedgwood, Smithers, Marley, Oswald Mosley, and Terence O'Connor. Then the motion for leave to bring in the Bill was duly carried. By that time all there was to say about the Bill had been said except for a reply by Walter Elliot, the Financial Secretary, and the Speaker had warned members that as the motion for leave had led to a full discussion on the Bill a repetition of it would not be permitted on the second reading. But a little knot of members, mostly not notable as experts on the subject, were evidently determined to prolong the proceedings: they occupied a considerable time on raising points of order and questions as to procedure,

and further speeches on the motion for leave were made, some of them lengthy, by Campbell Stephen, Mathers, Boothby, Aneurin Bevan, Jenny Lee, and Addison before Walter Elliot rose to reply shortly before eight o'clock. By that time, Snowden—who had an important dinner engagement—had left the House; he had refused to resort to Closure and as he left the House (apparently failing to realize the urgency of getting the Bill through) he told the Whips, well, if these fellows insist on talking, let them do so and we'll go on with the Bill to-morrow!

When the question was put on the motion for leave to bring in the Bill a division was called: the Speaker took the course of requiring the Ayes and Noes to stand up, and it was found that the Noes only numbered three.

Then about 8 p.m. Walter Elliot formally moved the second reading of the Bill and Campbell Stephen moved a reasoned motion for rejection. After some half-dozen speeches, Eyres-Monsell, the Chief Whip, at 9.40 moved the Closure which was carried by 271 to 148, and the second reading was carried by 275 to 112.

I then went into the Chair in Committee on the Bill; two or three M/S amendments to Clause 1 had been handed in and I announced that I selected only one, by E. F. Wise, subject to his making certain alterations necessary to bring it in order, to which he agreed. Walter Elliot replied briefly and a few sentences were added by Addison.

Shortly after 10 p.m. when the Committee stage had just begun, one of the Whips brought me a sheet of paper on which was written in pencil a message from the Treasury, not addressed to anyone particular, which was (and I well remember it) to the following effect: "We learn with alarm that there is a possibility of the House not finishing this Bill to-night. If the Bill does not become law before business hours to-morrow, the Bank of England will lose the whole of its gold before 10.30 a.m."

I read this and told the Whip it was no business of mine, it should go to the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Prime Minister: he said neither of them could be got hold of and the Chief Whip had told him to bring it to me. I then had to do some careful thinking: The reasonableness of the Treasury's alarm was clear when one realized that the Bank was obliged to sell gold on demand at less than half its then world market value, and that there was no prohibition of the export of gold. The intention to pass this Bill having been made public, the very thing which the

Bill was to prevent would be carried out if the chance were given by delay in passing the Bill. Clearly the third reading could probably not be obtained before 11 p.m. without my goodwill. But my course was clear. It was my duty to facilitate the business of the House, and while seeing that all parties got a proper hearing, to prevent unreasonable obstruction and delay, the whole House, with the possible exception of not more than about a dozen members, wanted the Bill to pass, those who did not, had said all they had to say over and over again, and my duty was therefore obvious. Closure on any further discussion was clearly justifiable: but the difficulty was that with only about forty minutes left, three divisions would occupy nearly all the time and then a fourth could not be finished by 11 p.m.: there was an amendment to Clause 1 before the Committee, then Clause 1 had to be carried and then Clause 2—making three possible divisions apart from others on Closure motions—after which the Bill had to be reported to the House and the third reading moved. It looked as if, including Closure motions, it might be impossible to avoid four divisions. This meant that the passing of the Bill by 11 p.m. could be prevented merely by making the House go through a number of divisions when the result of all those divisions was beyond doubt. I said to the Whip: "I'll do my best, but tell the Chief Whip he must hustle his men through the lobby as quickly as possible, and I will accept any Closure motion he wants." At 10.25 Eyres-Monsell moved the Closure on the amendment then before the Committee and it was carried by 276 to 191. The amendment was then put and defeated by 280 to 191. Eyres-Monsell then claimed, as he was entitled to do, to have Clause 1 put; I put it and it was carried by 277 to 12. It was 10.45 when the division on Clause 1 was called, and the House was getting excited and noisy: a member (seated and covered as required by the Standing Order) attempted to raise an alleged point of order; I replied that I could not quite hear all he said, but that I gathered he wished to make a complaint about something I had done, and that I was not conscious of having done anything wrong. At 6 minutes to 11, Clause 1 having been passed, I hurriedly called Clause 2 (the formal clause giving the short title). Eyres-Monsell in his excitement attempted to move the Closure: if I had accepted such a motion and put it to the Committee another division was practically certain, and even without a division the clock would have probably beaten me, if I had accepted a Closure motion. I ignored his attempt and "did

not see " any member rise to speak, put the question that Clause 2 stand part of the Bill, declared it carried, then put the formal questions of the Title and of the Report to the Committee and left the Committee Chair at 3 minutes before 11 p.m. The Bill being reported " without amendment," the third reading was at once put from the Chair of the House and carried without a division less than two minutes before the hour. So ended an exciting and, for me, anxious forty minutes. The Bill was at once sent to the Lords, they sent a message that they agreed to the Bill and the Commons were at once summoned to the House of Lords for the Royal Commission, and the Royal Assent being given, the Bill became law.

One important thing remained to be done, I believe, namely for an Order to be made by the Treasury, under the powers given by the Act, prohibiting the export of gold: this Order had been prepared and was duly made before business hours of the following day. Thus the Bank's gold was saved for the nation.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SECOND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, FORMED IN NOVEMBER 1931

THE General Election of October 1931 and its ten to one majority for the National Government has already been mentioned. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald formed his second National Government directly after the Election and the new Parliament met on 3rd November, for the formal preliminary business, and on 10th for the King's Speech and general business.

The most notable change in the Government was that Neville Chamberlain became Chancellor of the Exchequer in place of Snowden, who had now been raised to the peerage as Viscount Snowden, having refrained from standing as a candidate for re-election to the House of Commons.

Snowden's acceptance of a peerage was a surprise to many, roused anger among his former Socialist friends, and caused amusement among his political opponents. Lansbury described it in the House as a "degradation," and Mr. Churchill spoke of it as having "encashed his long years of devotion to Socialism in a Viscounty and a seat on the red benches of the aristocracy." But it is not difficult to suggest what may have been his reason for taking this course: no one would suppose that he was anxious for the social prestige; but he felt the turmoil and trouble of a contested election (which he was certain to have had to face), and the strenuous life of the House of Commons were more than his health would now stand. On the other hand, his many years in political life and in Parliament, coupled with his intense devotion to what he believed to be the interests of his fellow-countrymen (never shown more clearly than when he split with many of his most intimate colleagues and friends a few months before), may well have made him reluctant to give up Parliamentary life entirely; if he were to leave the House of Commons, his only way of continuing Parliamentary life was to become a member of the House of Lords. He had no son, so that in his case he was in effect taking a life-peerage which many other members of the House of Commons, with sons, have wished they could do under similar circumstances.

The steps taken to deal with the Crisis in the autumn of 1931 by the first National Government have been already described.

The reconstructed or second National Government had to complete the rehabilitation of the National finances, and their work in that direction, now a matter of history, might well be the subject of a lengthy volume of great interest to economists and financial experts, but perhaps boring to those less versed in such difficult matters.

But many events in the new House of Commons were of interest to all politically minded people, and not devoid of amusing incidents—nor indeed of problems for the Chairman in the early stages of my tenure of that office !

The only important financial Bill which the new Government was able to deal with before the Christmas Recess was the Abnormal Importations Customs Duties Bill, often called the anti-dumping Bill : the necessary Ways and Means Resolution for this Bill was moved directly the Address had been disposed of, and the Bill was passed through all stages in two days, Standing Orders being suspended to enable this to be done : both the Resolution and the suspension of Standing Orders were strongly opposed by the small Labour Opposition, as was the Bill itself.

Another important Bill (not connected with Finance) which was passed before the Recess was the Statute of Westminster, but this has already been referred to and has nothing to do with Finance.

In addition to the difficulties of its task in Parliament, the Government had its internal difficulties. It was like an able and strong man with great and responsible work to do, hampered by some physical disease or illness. The Government suffered from the old trouble caused by its inclusion of extreme Free-traders : this trouble and the way in which it was temporarily dealt with at the General Election by the action taken by Sir John Simon, and by the “ Doctor’s Mandate,” has already been described, but the disease had not been eradicated or cured ; it soon broke out again in an acute form, and was dealt with by another unusual temporary expedient—the famous agreement to differ.

When Parliament reassembled after the Christmas Recess, the Government introduced their great and important Import Duties Bill, which they were able to proceed with under the Agreement to differ in spite of the openly avowed disapproval of Samuel and his Free-Trade colleagues. The Import Duties Act was a truly historic piece of legislation, for its effect was to make the United Kingdom a tariff-protected country after nearly a hundred years of Free Trade.

The Bill proposed an *ad valorem* duty of 10 per cent. on all imported goods, with the exception of certain foodstuffs and other articles set out in a Schedule, with provisions enabling the duty on any of the taxed goods to be increased by Orders in Council. It was over the proposals in this Bill that the differences in the Cabinet between the Tariff-reformers and the Free-traders again became serious: this was towards the end of January, when it was understood Samuel and three other Free-Trade members of the Cabinet offered to resign; but such an end to the Coalition or alliance of parties, so soon after the General Election and formation of the second National Government, would not only have been a serious blow to the Government, but would have caused a bad setback in the gradual restoration and rebuilding of the credit of the country. So, on the suggestion, I believe, of Lord Hailsham, the Cabinet adopted the Agreement to differ. Under this, the tariff proposals of the majority of the Cabinet were to be proceeded with, in spite of the non-concurrence of the Free-Trade minority who were to have liberty to express their opposition and yet to retain their offices. This amounted to an unprecedented "suspension" for this occasion of the long-established constitutional principle of Cabinet unity and joint responsibility. It could only be justified by the critical circumstances of the time which had already brought about the "Coalition" of September 1931, a Coalition for purposes of dealing with a crisis, not dissimilar to the Coalition formed for the purposes of the War of 1914-18, and afterwards of the War of 1939. The two war-time Coalitions were beyond doubt sanctioned by the general assent of the people. Any doubt about the peace-time Coalition of 1931 had been disposed of by the approval of the electorate at a General Election. It might well be argued that if the coalition of parties was justified, the Cabinet's Agreement to differ was also justified on the principle that the greater includes the less. In any Coalition Government there must be differences, and if those differences affect the main question upon which the Coalition was formed, some method of getting over those differences is essential to success of the Government's efforts to solve the main question.

The question of the justification or otherwise of the Agreement to differ was the subject of a full-dress debate in the House, because the small but active Opposition moved a vote of censure on the Government on that account. They obtained no sympathy or help from any of the supporters of the Government, and mustered only thirty-nine in the division lobby. The Agreement

to differ, having without difficulty survived that attack, lasted until the end of September, when the necessity for it had at least become less urgent—perhaps, it may be said, had come to an end. Then the Agreement was terminated by the resignation of Samuel and his Free-Trade colleagues when they felt that their differences from the majority over the Ottawa Agreements could not be regarded as covered by the Agreement.

Whatever objections may have been, or may be, raised to that temporary expedient, historians will probably agree that it, in fact, served a useful purpose, and will point to it as an example of the beneficial effect of the flexibility of our Constitution rather than brand it with the condemnatory and often ill-used adjective “unconstitutional.”

This at any rate should be said, that the four Cabinet Ministers mainly concerned, Snowden, Herbert Samuel, Donald Maclean, and Archibald Sinclair, were generally recognized, even by political opponents, as men of the highest character and not addicted to behaving in an unconstitutional manner.

The Bill was very fully debated (in addition to a lengthy debate on the Ways and Means Resolution) on the second reading and in Committee, and notwithstanding that the dissenting members of the Cabinet opposed and voted against it, it was carried by large majorities, the figures on the second reading being 451 to 73, and on third reading 442 to 62, and every amendment not agreed to by the Government and pressed to a division being defeated by a large majority.

The Schedule, which contained the free list or list of articles exempted from the 10 per cent. duty, was of course an important part of the Bill, and received much attention in Committee. At the commencement of the Committee stage, I was asked by Colonel Gretton to give a ruling as to what amendments to the Schedule would or would not be in order. Here perhaps it should be explained that under those very important Standing Orders dealing with the grant of money no tax can be imposed unless sanctioned by a Resolution of the House in Committee. Therefore every Bill imposing taxation must be founded upon such a Resolution in Committee, and the Bill cannot impose any tax upon subjects of the realm which is not within the authority given by such a Resolution.

I had no difficulty in ruling that as the Ways and Means Resolution had been so worded as to authorize Parliament to settle by the Bill what articles should or should not be taxed, any

amendment to add items to the free list, or to take items out, would be in order, and could be moved not only by the Government but by private members.

But a little later I had to deal with a point of more difficulty, when I found it necessary to rule that certain substantial and important amendments put down by the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself were out of order.

As already mentioned, the Bill provided that Orders in Council might be made after the Act was passed, adding additional articles to the free list, thus relieving them from the tax, and that such Orders might also be made increasing the rate of tax on any articles made liable to the basic tax of 10 per cent.

The Chancellor proposed to move amendments to enable Orders in Council to *remove* articles from the free list and thus make them subject to the tax. Although the Resolution was so drawn as to leave Parliament free to decide what articles should or should not be in the free list, it did not authorize the Treasury or the Government, or anybody else, when the Bill had become an Act, to *impose* a tax on any articles not subjected to tax by the Act (or in other words on any article included by the Act in the free list and so not subjected to the 10 per cent. tax). Therefore, although the Resolution left Parliament free to decide in the *Bill* what should or should not be taxed by the Act, it did not authorize the imposition of a tax, *after* the Act was passed, on articles not taxed by the Act. Consequently when the Chancellor's amendments appeared on the Order Paper, and I decided that they were out of order, because they would have the effect of levying a tax not authorized by the Ways and Means Committee Resolution, I at once notified my decision to the Treasury: it placed the Government in some difficulty, as they took the view that if it was to be permissible to add items to the free list by Orders in Council, it must also be permissible to take items out in the same way. Sir Wm. Graham Harrison, K.C., the then head Treasury draftsman, and other Treasury officials, had a lengthy interview with me and the Clerks of the House, when they argued against my decision, and endeavoured to persuade me to alter it: but I held to my opinion, which I was, and still am, persuaded was right, and the more firmly because the Standing Orders, as to taxation not being imposed unless sanctioned in Committee, are a most important part of the Constitution. Neville Chamberlain, the Government, and the House accepted my decision without question; but the point being so important, Chamberlain told

me he would ask me in the House, when ruling the amendments out of order, to explain my reason for doing so : this he was of course fully entitled to do ; and, as I told him, I considered it was a case on which I ought to explain my ruling to the House, which I did in due course. As a result, the Government had to ask the House to do what they desired in this respect on another occasion, and by a Bill founded upon a Committee Resolution giving the necessary authority. The matter was subsequently dealt with accordingly in the next Finance Bill after the Budget.

Another provision contained in the Import Duties Bill should be noted as of particular importance from a Constitutional point of view, and as a matter of Parliamentary procedure, namely the powers given to do things by Orders in Council. This is an instance which shows both the advantage of, and the need for caution in, delegating legislative powers to the Executive. Under the circumstances it was essential to the success of the Tariff policy that there should be machinery under which protective duties could be imposed or removed, or increased or reduced more promptly and quickly than by Act of Parliament. On the other hand, the granting of such financial powers needed to be carried out with great care : hence the provisions for an Advisory Committee, as well as the ultimate power of Parliament to negative Orders in Council.

The Budget and the Finance Bill of 1932, which among other things dealt with the setting up of the Exchange Equalization Account, carried further the financial rehabilitation policy of the Government. In Committee on the Finance Bill, a curious incident led to my having to deal with an unusual and awkward situation. A fairly strong group of members had been for some time engaged in strenuous efforts to bring about a reduction in the Beer duty, and an amendment to the Finance Bill for that purpose had been put down by Sir William Wayland, and a long and important debate upon it was expected. Having been in the Chair in Committee for some hours, my deputy, Captain Bourne, relieved me at about 8 p.m. to enable me to have dinner : I went across to St. Stephen's Club to dine, and in the middle of my dinner I received an urgent message from Bourne to return as he was expecting difficulties. I went back to the House at once. I found that a number of amendments had collapsed or been disposed of with unaccustomed celerity, with the result that the Beer Duty amendment, which had not been expected to be reached before nine o'clock, had been reached and called about an hour

earlier, and none of the backers of the amendment was in the House at the time, with the result that it was not moved and the Committee proceeded with the later amendments. A number of members interested in the amendment hurried into the House, and were anxious to get the amendment moved, but it was too late : under the ordinary rules, the amendment not having been moved when called, lapsed, and the Committee could not go back to it. This aroused great excitement, as well as amusement, and Captain Bourne, anticipating that a determined attempt would be made to raise the matter in some way, had sent for me, and at his request I again took the Chair. Soon after that a motion to report progress was moved in order to discuss the position which had arisen, and an appeal was made to the Government and the House by supporters of the amendment that in view of the great interest taken in the subject, some means should be found for discussing and taking the decision of the Committee upon it. On the other hand, their opponents did not fail to "rub in" the fact that the supporters of the amendment had no one but themselves to blame, and that they must take the consequences of their failure to keep someone in the House to watch the progress of business. I listened to this discussion with interest, but I did not foresee the suggestion which then came from Baldwin who as leader of the House replied to what had been said. After briefly summarizing the facts and the awkward situation which has arisen he said he advised that the Committee's best course would be to leave themselves in the hands of the Chairman ! So I had to make up my mind quickly. I explained that a M/S amendment could be handed in to the Chair at any time before the place at which it would take effect ; that if such an amendment was merely a repetition at a later point of an amendment which had already been disposed of (by not being moved or otherwise) I could not accept it as it would be an abuse of the rules of debate ; that it was generally recognized that the Chairman could not be expected to select and call a M/S amendment handed in at the last moment, but that if a different amendment, though intended to have a similar effect, to come in at the end of the clause, were handed in by another or other members before the other amendments to the clause had been disposed of, I would under the special circumstances consider whether I could properly select and call it if there were time to do so before 11 p.m., the normal time for concluding the Committee's business for the day. The business being exempted business *could* be continued after 11 p.m.,

but I said that unless it was the general wish of the Committee (which I was sure would not be the case), I could not ask the Committee to continue sitting after 11 p.m. for such a purpose. This seemed to meet with general approval. The motion to report progress was adjourned, and the Committee proceeded with its work. A suitable M/S amendment to come in at the end of the clause was handed in to me almost at once. I read the amendment and considered carefully the propriety of calling it when the time came. But as the discussion of the amendment then before the Committee proceeded, I found that time might come to my aid ; and so it was : the discussion of the amendment then before the Committee looked like continuing till 11 p.m. I must confess to having watched the clock with considerable interest : the discussion continued till 11 p.m. and thus I was relieved from any necessity to consider calling the M/S amendment ; and before the Committee again proceeded with the Bill the members interested decided to leave the subject to be dealt with on the Report stage.

CHAPTER XXII

CONVERSION OF THE 5 PER CENT. WAR LOAN

IN June of 1932 the House of Commons was treated to a thrill when Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced his plan for the Conversion of over 2,000 million pounds of 5 per cent. War Loan into a $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. stock.

It was not merely the thrill of an announcement of a great financial operation, it was in part like the unfolding of the story of a deep-laid secret plot, as in truth it was.

Some method of dealing with this enormous burden on the National Exchequer, costing over 100 million pounds a year in interest (more than the total National Budget a few years before the War of 1914-18), had for long been a matter on which national financiers had exercised their brains and fancies: Snowden had included certain provisions in his Finance Bill of the previous September to give the Treasury some of the necessary ancillary powers. That something should be done about it was therefore not surprising, but it was at least intensely exciting to learn what that something was, and that it was to be done at once. No one, however, except the very few who had been concerned in the arrangements, dreamt for a moment of such a scheme as was unfolded. There were, too, details of human interest, and of a somewhat dramatic nature.

It was on Thursday, June 30th, that the announcement was made: people in the City had indeed a week or more before fancied that something was in the wind, and were whispering among themselves their ideas of what it might be: they found confirmation of their expectations in the fact that a few days before June 30th the Bank rate was suddenly reduced to 2 per cent., the lowest rate at which it had been fixed for many years. But their forecasts bore about the same resemblance to the fact as a lollipop does to a hogshead of sugar.

On the evening of Thursday, 30th June, when the House was engaged in miscellaneous and not very important business, and was not very full, word was passed round through the Whips in the dining-rooms, the library, smoking-rooms, and other precincts, for members to be in the Chamber by about 9 p.m. as some Government statement of interest was to be anticipated then or soon after.

Just after 9 p.m., the Chancellor of the Exchequer came into the House, and a few minutes later, Baldwin, the Leader of the House, moved that the debate be adjourned to enable the Chancellor to make an important statement: this having been agreed to, Neville Chamberlain rose and formally moved the adjournment of the House so that he might make his statement.

His introductory words about the need for and advantages of a conversion, and the appropriateness of the time for doing it, and so on, occupied some minutes. Then suddenly came the statement: "In a few moments' time a special edition of the *London Gazette* will be published. It will contain a notice intimating that the Government intend to repay the War Loan in cash on the first December next." Members gasped, and one heard astonished *sotto voce* exclamations "The whole of it?" There had been a kind of sweepstake in Stock Exchange circles as to the proportion of the loan of over 2,000 million pounds which would be dealt with in the first operation, for no one expected it to be more than a partial scheme, and the man who had been offering to pay a fiver for every million over two-thirds against payment to him of a pound for every million under two-thirds of the total must have felt uncomfortable.

The Chancellor then explained the offer he was making to holders, to take a $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. loan in exchange, and the inducements to them to do so.

He went on to tell us something of the astonishing arrangements which had been made. Five printed forms, including a letter of a simple explanatory nature from himself, had to go to every one of the nearly three million holders of the stock—in all approximately fifteen million forms to be printed, folded, and placed in approximately three million envelopes, to be addressed to the stockholders. Every Member of Parliament who has had to send out (say) three forms each to 75,000 electors in his constituency will perhaps be able to appreciate what this means: 75,000 electors is just one-fortieth part of three million stockholders.

But these three million postal packets were to be (and they were) posted on the following day!

Work had necessarily been going on for some days in preparation for this, and it all had to be done (and was done) in absolute secrecy: employees of H.M. Stationery Office and other large printing firms whose help had been enlisted, after going to work one day, found themselves prisoners! They were fed and well

looked after, but they were locked in and cut off from the outside world till the public announcement was made.

As is well known, this operation was completely successful, and all but a very small percentage of holders took the new stock.

This most important and large economy may be said to have been the completion of the great task they had undertaken less than a year before to re-establish the country's financial position.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA BILL OF 1935

WE have all known people possessed of a facility for "rising to the occasion," under the stress of an unexpected crisis or of other special circumstances; and achieving a success of which we should have thought them incapable; modern science has, I believe, a theory that this is explainable as due to certain glands being brought into operation by the pressure of particular needs. However that may be, I think corporate bodies of persons sometimes show similar facilities for rising to the occasion, and that the House of Commons is one of those bodies and showed a remarkable example of the facility in the case of the Government of India Bill of 1935, the passing of which was one of the most stupendous legislative tasks ever carried out by Parliament. As introduced it consisted of 451 clauses and 15 schedules to which new clauses and new schedules were added in course of its passage through the House. The Bill was an attempt after long and exhaustive enquiries and preparation by Committees, Conferences, and investigations to provide methods for the constitutional government of a vast continent of many provinces and more independent States, containing a population of over 300 millions of people of many different races, religions, and tongues, whose geographical distribution did not coincide with either their racial or religious distinctions. Moreover, it was highly controversial and strongly opposed, some holding that it went too far, and others that it did not go far enough. The nature of the Bill gave many opportunities for obstruction, added to by events which occurred during the Committee stage, and the Bill cut across all the ordinary differences of political parties and groups. A majority of the House was on the whole in favour of the Bill in principle, as shown by the second reading after four full days' debate, being carried by 404 votes to 133. Judging by previous experience, such a Bill could not be carried through within the session except by drastic use of the Governments numerical majority, in application of the powers of Closure and a Guillotine Resolution causing inadequate or no consideration of many or indeed probably most of the vital and important provisions of the Bill.

In spite of all this, the Committee stage was completed in thirty Parliamentary days, without any Guillotine Resolution,

without a single application of the Closure, and with no unduly prolonged sittings, and without excluding from reasonable consideration any clause or schedule. Nor was there ever an unpleasant "scene" or row, and the Chair never had to exercise any of what may be called its disciplinary powers further than occasionally to terminate a member's speech on account of repetition or continued irrelevance. After such an effective Committee stage, the Report stage was carried out in a like satisfactory manner in four Parliamentary days: the third reading occupied two Parliamentary days and was carried by 386 votes to 122, figures nearly the same as on second reading.

The success of the Committee stage was due to a special and unrepresented form of procedure, carried out under what became known as the "Gentlemen's Agreement": but it was never embodied in any formal agreement or scheme, nor was it the invention of any individual or group of individuals: broadly it may be said to have been gradually evolved by the House and indeed it only reached its final shape after it actually commenced working.

Early in the second reading debate, Mr. Churchill, a leading opponent of the Bill, promised the co-operation of himself and his followers in an effort to avoid any formal Guillotine procedure: later on the same day, Mr. Baldwin on behalf of the Government announced that agreement had been reached as to the number of days to be allowed for the Committee stage and that "a large measure of agreement had been reached" regarding the time-table and that an informal committee had been set up under the chairmanship of the Chairman of Ways and Means, consisting of representatives of all parties and groups to draw up the time-table: that Committee ultimately consisted of some fifteen members, selected by the Chief Government Whip and myself in consultation with the leaders or Whips of the various parties and groups. On the 13th of February, two days after completion of the second reading debate, Mr. Baldwin was able to inform the House that the informal committee had agreed to a time-table and would remain in being to review the working of it, and that the Government thought it might be possible to dispense with a Guillotine Resolution.

The informal committee had arranged with the Government that thirty Parliamentary days should be allowed for the Committee stage, of which twenty-six should be allocated to specific portions of the Bill, and four should be "in reserve" for use as

might be needed : the representatives of the various parties promised on behalf of those they represented, to endeavour to keep to the time-table and to avoid waste of time or obstruction, and the Government in return agreed that so long as such arrangements were satisfactorily carried out, they would not ask the House to pass a Guillotine Resolution nor resort to the Closure : it was, however, clearly understood that the Government retained complete freedom of action if the proposed friendly arrangements did not work successfully.

But the informal committee did much more than this : they discussed at some length many points of detail : how their followers were to be persuaded to work the proposals, how waste of time could be avoided, either by goodwill or by slight variations of forms of procedure ; how the Chairman could assist, both in the Chamber by advice or appeals to members, and outside by discussing with members amendments they put down, and by giving information as to what amendments would or would not be selected.

* When Mr. Baldwin made the announcement as to doing without a Guillotine Resolution he said the only motion the House would be asked to pass was (1) authorizing putting several clauses to the Committee together, instead of separately, when no amendments to them were proposed and (2) arranging for postponement of any private business which might have to be set down for debate in the House : this motion was put down at the request or with the approval of the informal committee already mentioned which was now discussing every possible method of facilitating the Committee proceedings : it was duly passed after the House had obtained from the Government an assurance in addition to the conditional promises they had already made, that they would endeavour to avoid unduly late sittings. The provision as to a number of clauses being put to the Committee *en bloc* instead of separately merely authorized a procedure which had already been often adopted with the general assent of the House ; it was specially useful on this occasion because the Bill contained a considerable number of clauses relating to Burma, which were mere duplication of earlier clauses relating to India.

Such were the circumstances in which the House of Commons entered upon the heavy task of the Committee stage of the India Bill.

The provisional time-table had been voluntarily agreed for

completing the whole Bill in twenty-six days, four more days being available if and as required.

At the end of the first six days, we were badly behind the point in the Bill which we should have reached under the time-table : we never caught up with it, but that did not disturb me overmuch, so long as I felt there was no attempt at obstruction or waste of time : I knew that towards the end it would be easier to make progress, after the chief points arising had been sufficiently debated : moreover, though I was very anxious to complete the Committee stage without exceeding the thirty days, I was confident that provided the work went well on the whole, the Government could afford to, and if necessary would, allow another few days in order to enable the Bill to go through the Committee without resort to any drastic shortening of the time occupied. In fact, as already stated, we completed the Bill just within the thirty (i.e. twenty-six plus four) days originally agreed upon.

On first taking the Chair in Committee, I made a brief statement, as had been arranged by the informal committee, about the provisional arrangements which had been made : I told the Committee that the Chair had no additional or unusual powers, but that it was thought that a saving of time would be effected if the Chairman were allowed to guide and direct the Committee in its discussions to an extent which was unusual and could only be done with the concurrence of members and willingness on their part to accept such guidance and direction. I appealed to them to act accordingly, and also to consult me from time to time privately on possible points of order and other questions they might desire to raise, rather than to occupy the time of the Committee on such matters. I soon found that in a Bill of this kind the Committee's work could be materially assisted by a Chairman being able to direct and generally supervise the proceedings : for example, there were many important points requiring considerable discussion which would arise on and be relevant to several different amendments and indeed several different clauses or schedules : in such cases much time could be saved by a direction as to a particular matter being fully discussed at some particular point in the proceedings and not at other times, and by so associating together several amendments as to be able to treat one of them as the occasion for a full debate and the others as mainly consequential. All this, however, could only be done effectively by a single individual, and I therefore found it necessary to be in the Chair myself most of the time and to make much

less use than I should normally have done of my Deputy Chairman, Captain Bourne : I could not, however, have had a more efficient or understanding deputy, and thus I was more easily able to obtain sufficient relief from the Chair for meals and so on than might have been the case. I had only one difficulty in regard to him : he so loved his work and sitting in the Chair, that I knew he would dislike not sharing equally with me the work of presiding over the Committee : in fact, he would have liked to do the greater part of it ! But I was certain in my own mind that it was a " one man job " and that if the " Chair " was to carry out its part successfully in this novel and somewhat delicate arrangement, the man who had been mainly concerned in negotiating it, must be the man to work it : it was a heavy responsibility and one which it was difficult to delegate to or share with someone else.

I explained my views on the subject frankly to Bourne who, as he always did, readily complied with my wishes. But I knew he felt a little disappointed : so I put him in the Chair as often and for as long as I dared, always telling him as far as possible what I wanted him to do : and often, when he was in the Chair and I returned, I remained behind the Speaker's Chair watching the course of the debate, and leaving him as long as I felt I could safely do so.

Members generally and especially those who took a leading or specially active part in the debates responded well to the appeal I had made at the opening of the proceedings, as they did to other appeals I had to make from time to time, and did their best to work in the spirit of the arrangements which had been agreed upon : they were very helpful to me in a task which was necessarily difficult and without such help would have been impossible. None the less, I was frequently obliged to be constantly on my feet interrupting members' speeches in order to curb irrelevance or repetition or to appeal for brevity ; and on a few (happily rare) occasions I had some rather sharp altercations with some members. The informal committee held a few meetings, but more often I consulted the leading members thereof separately, or in groups, to obtain their advice or concurrence in the course I thought best to adopt. Our difficulties were occasionally added to by extraneous events ; for example, the publication, on the morning of the third allotted day, of the proceedings of the Chamber of Princes, which led to a rather lengthy debate on a motion to report progress which was amply justified by what had

occurred. I found my time in the mornings before the meeting of the House busily occupied every day in interviews with party whips and other members in discussions about amendments on the Order paper, informing them of my intentions regarding selection of amendments and arranging where proposed amendments should be raised and so forth ; such matters occasionally occupied me for some time late at night also after the House rose.

Prominent among the opponents of the Bill was Mr. Churchill, not only a keen and able debater but a master of Parliamentary tactics and procedure, a man therefore to be carefully watched, not only by his opponents but by the Chair ! Had he chosen to disregard the arrangements made, he could well have caused them to break down. But he is a true House of Commons man : he was a party to the informal agreement—in fact in my opinion he, more than anyone else, was responsible for the scheme—and no one is more punctilious than he about the observance of a Parliamentary bargain or agreement : he was, I think, as keen about the success of this experiment in procedure as in his opposition to the Bill.

Happily for me we had long been good friends and knew each other well. The first day in Committee was naturally rather a strain on me, and when the House rose at 11 p.m. I went to the smoking-room for a little refreshment and relaxation : I got both—from him ! No one can be a more agreeable smoking-room companion than he ; and as soon as I entered the door he hailed me with “Would it be *lèse-majesté* to offer the Chairman a drink ? ” I gladly accepted his offer, and ever after that, when I could do so, during the progress of the Committee, I joined him in the smoking-room after the House rose and talked over the debate and how the experiment was progressing.

The Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, and his able Under-Secretary of State, R. A. Butler, both knew thoroughly their difficult and complex business, and their patience and tact during these long days in Committee were unflinching. Everyone concerned was most helpful to me, and for my part the India Bill made me many good friends, and as far as I know did not cause me to make an enemy in the House.

This story of the India Bill is a piece of Parliamentary history of some importance : as a method of dealing successfully with a specially difficult task it is, and may well remain, a unique event in Parliamentary procedure, as it is difficult to believe that it can ever be exactly repeated. Nevertheless, it must be of great

value to Members of Parliament in several ways and especially to those concerned in trying to improve the efficiency of procedure.

It is an example of the value of tradition in the House : two great principles based upon tradition are respect for the Chair and the sanctity of a Parliamentary agreement or undertaking. Respect for the Chair means much more than obedience to the rules of the House as stated from the Chair, and requires more than belief in the impartiality and fairness of the occupant of the Chair : it requires, in addition to a recognition of the need for compliance with the rules, a readiness to accept the advice and guidance of the Chair in regard to the general conduct of debate, and this means that the occupant of the Chair must make himself regarded as not only fair and impartial, but also competent to guide the House in making debate effective. The sanctity of a Parliamentary agreement means a readiness to abide by and carry out the spirit and intention of an agreement which, though clearly understood, has not been and probably cannot easily be precisely and fully expressed in words.

These two great principles so useful to the House have their origin in, and derive their strength from, the traditions which like so much of our democratic Constitution are not written rules, but are enshrined in precedents and customs gradually built up through the centuries by the good sense and high standards of conduct of the representatives of the British People : it is by such means that we have been able to preserve orderly true liberty against the dangers of autocracy, of mob rule, and of violent revolution.

In the realm of practical procedure, the India Bill experiment justifies a belief that a different and improved form of Guillotine Resolution could be based upon the procedure adopted on this occasion under the so-called "Gentlemen's Agreement." Instead of the old form of fixing exact moments of time and dates for completion of certain portions of the Bill, it should provide for the allocation of certain specified periods of time being allotted for specified clauses or blocks of clauses, or parts of the Bill, with machinery for allowing a limited extension of each such period of time if the specified business has not been completed within the specified time : during such extension of time amendments selected by the Chairman for discussion should be moved and discussed under certain restrictions as to the number of speeches permitted on each amendment, and as to the length of such speeches.

Detailed proposals of a tentative nature for a Guillotine Resolution on these lines were considered by the Conservative Party Research Committee shortly before the India Bill was brought in ; presumably those proposals are still somewhere in the archives of the Conservative Party, and in light of the success of the India Bill experiment, may well be worth consideration and trial at some future date.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SILVER JUBILEE OF KING GEORGE V AND HIS DEATH AND FUNERAL

A GREAT historical event took place in Westminster Hall when King George V and Queen Mary on the 9th of May, 1935, came there on the occasion of their Silver Jubilee. It was not a mere meeting of members of the two Houses, but it was officially a meeting of Parliament as a whole, that is to say of both Houses and the Sovereign. On this occasion, therefore, the two Houses met as usual in their respective Chambers, and then, headed by their respective Speakers and their Maces, marched in procession to Westminster Hall to await the arrival of the King and Queen. A few days before the actual date, the Clerk of the House of Commons said to me, "Are you aware that apart from the Speaker, you, as Chairman of Ways and Means are No. 3 in the order of precedence in the House?" I said, "No, it sounds very interesting, but what is the point?"—"Well," he said, "it means that when we go to Westminster Hall on Thursday, you will have to march there in your proper place in the first four of the procession: the regular order of precedence is the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chairman of Ways and Means: but I have been requested to ask you whether on this occasion you would have any objection to becoming No. 4 instead of No. 3 in order to enable the Leader of the Liberal Opposition to follow next to the Leader of the Labour Opposition"; I, of course, replied that I had not the least objection, and thus the first four was composed of Ramsay MacDonald the then Prime Minister, Lansbury, the Leader of the Labour Opposition, Sir Herbert Samuel, the Leader of the Liberal Opposition, and myself as Chairman of Ways and Means. The fours immediately following were composed of the principal members of the Government and other Privy Councillors and then other members. The four immediately following the first four, included Mr. Stanley Baldwin (as he then was), the Lord President of the Council, and Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer: this resulted in a rather amusing conversation with Baldwin: shortly before this, a State Ball had taken place at Buckingham Palace in which the first dance was led off by Mrs. Baldwin: next day, a few members were talking about this and

wondering why this should have been done by Mrs. Baldwin and not by the Prime Minister's daughter, Miss Ishbel MacDonald : none of us knew the reason, but a few minutes later I ran across Baldwin in one of the corridors, and asked him the reason : I said it had been suggested that perhaps it had something to do with his being Lord President of the Council. He told me that it was purely a matter of arrangement and convenience because it was not convenient for Ishbel to be there and his (Baldwin's) wife was therefore asked to take her place : then he said, " but though it had nothing to do with my being Lord President, I would have you know that as Lord President I am a hell of a fellow ! I take precedence of practically everybody including Dukes, except Royal Dukes—or rather I should do if I were a peer : but not being a peer I am not quite certain about it " : I laughed, and told him that I thoroughly appreciated his high position and dignity. But when I learnt what I have mentioned above as to my precedence in the House of Commons, I saw a chance which was too good to miss : when I next met him I said, " You remember telling me what a hell of a fellow you are as Lord President ? " He said, " Yes, I remember quite well and it is quite true." I said, " I know, but do you realize what a hell of a fellow I am in the House of Commons ? " He said, " Of course, but what do you mean ? " and I said, " On Thursday next in the procession to Westminster Hall I take precedence of, and walk in front of, you, so I must be a hell of a fellow to be taking precedence of the Lord President ! "

When the day came the House of Commons met in the usual way and after prayers, and disposing of certain formal business, we marched to Westminster Hall as arranged. The Speaker preceded by the Mace and accompanied by the Clerk of the House and his Secretary and Train Bearer led the procession, and the members followed, marching in fours as I have described. The Lords came in a similar way by another entrance, with the Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, as their Speaker, with the Mace of the House of Lords. The two Speakers sat in Chairs provided for them on either side of one of the lower steps of the dais at the end of Westminster Hall, each one having the Mace of his House on a pedestal in front of his chair.

We were waiting there in silence for the fanfare, when several of us heard the unmistakable voice of the King : we afterwards learnt that when they had alighted and got inside the entrance, Queen Mary had told him that his hair was ruffled and proceeded

to put it straight for him and in a cheery way he made some exclamation such as "Don't fuss me about": then came the fanfare and Their Majesties came on to the dais, ushered to their places by Mr. Ormsby-Gore as the then First Commissioner of Works. Immediately on the King's arrival, the two Maces were covered with handsome velvet cloths prepared for the purpose, this being a mark of respect to the Sovereign in accordance with ancient custom and usage. The proceedings then commenced with the Lord Chancellor reading, on behalf of the House of Lords, an address of congratulation to Their Majesties: he was followed by the Speaker of the House of Commons reading a similar address on behalf of the Commons.

It was a wonderful and memorable scene, Their Majesties looking radiantly happy and their four sons in gilt chairs on the dais, all in morning dress, with a Lord-in-Waiting, the Lord Great Chamberlain, and the First Commissioner of Works standing behind them, other members of the Royal Family, Indian Princes, representatives of British India and of the Dominions and Colonies were in seats in compartments erected on the broad steps to the dais on either side. Then there were the two Speakers wearing their full-bottomed wigs and gold-braided gowns in their Chairs just below, with the Maces on the pedestals in front of them, and with the principal officers of the two Houses behind the Chairs of their two respective Speakers, and in the body of the Hall, the Judges, the Bishops, members of the two Houses, former members and other privileged persons, and at the end of the Hall a few hundred fortunate ladies, being as many as there was room for, of wives of members of the two Houses. The string band of the Royal Artillery was present on duty, and the entire Hall was brilliantly lighted with diffused floodlighting.

Some days previously when the formal motion was passed for an address to be delivered by the Speaker, the House very wisely decided that the address should be made "by Mr. Speaker in his own words." The address which he delivered was a masterpiece, as those of us who knew him expected it would be, and on the return of the Commons to their own Chamber the House showed its appreciation when it ordered that the address should be recorded in the Journals of the House, which was done.

After His Majesty had replied, the whole company rose and sang God save the King, and cheers, called for by the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker, for the King and Queen were given as they left by the North Door at the other end of the Hall,

after walking slowly down the long gangway. The two Houses then returned in procession to their respective Chambers.

The next notable event in Westminster Hall was on the following 23rd of January, 1936, when the coffin containing the body of King George V was brought there from Sandringham to lie in state for a few days. It was brought by train to King's Cross and thence taken in procession through the streets to Westminster: Westminster Hall was closed until the coffin had been placed in position there. When this had been done, members of the two Houses were allowed into Westminster Hall for the brief service which then took place, after which they were to be permitted to bring their wives into Westminster Hall.

The Imperial Crown had been placed on the coffin, and as I looked at it, thinking of the many occasions on which I had seen it worn by King George on State-openings of Parliament, I noticed that the small cross forming the top of the Crown was missing. It turned out that, probably through the jolting of the train and of the car on the way to Westminster, the cross had become unscrewed and had fallen off in the street. Fortunately it was noticed by a soldier in the procession who picked it up. I had arranged with my wife that she would wait during the Service at the side entrance, and come into the Hall with me directly after the service. I brought her in accordingly, but only to find that the orders had been changed and that no ladies were to be admitted, but that the Hall was to be closed for a short time. The reason for this change was the fact of the cross having come off the Crown: the Court Jeweller had been sent for to replace it, and it was thought advisable to clear the Hall for this purpose.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ABDICATION, 1936

THE full inner story of the Abdication of H.M. King Edward VIII will be a matter for publication after all those principally concerned are dead. In any case I am not in a position to write that inner history. Although the position of a king may cause his subjects to be concerned with his private and domestic affairs to an extent which in the case of a private individual would be improper and impertinent, I do not propose to deal with that beyond such brief references as are necessary to facts which were common knowledge at the time. I intend to tell the story as it was known to, and concerned, every ordinary member of the House of Commons. Apart from the fact that I was in the Chair for the Committee stage of the Abdication Bill, I had nothing more to do with the matter and knew little if anything more about it than any ordinary private member. But no one who was a member of the House of Commons at that time can have failed to recognize the momentous crisis which was taking place and the grave responsibility which rested on Parliament as a whole and on every individual member.

In the War of 1914-18, Edward, then Prince of Wales, showed himself not only a gallant and energetic soldier, but a brave man to an extent which caused some embarrassment to his senior officers and to those whose duty it was to pay special attention to his safety. It is said that when they endeavoured to restrain him or remonstrated with him for disregard of danger his reply was to the effect that he had plenty of younger brothers to take his place if he were killed. Later, when his father's life was obviously precarious, there was some speculation as to what sort of a king he would make and a certain amount of doubt about it was expressed, but on King George's death his statements to his people and his conduct generally showed a determination to devote himself to his duties, and hopes rose high of his proving a good king, as indeed in many respects he did during his brief reign. The Press in America and in some other countries, however, were soon full of stories about his private life which the Press in this country for the most part carefully ignored and refrained from repeating: yet in political circles there was much anxiety not merely in regard to his private

life, but in regard to purely Constitutional matters also, and there were rumours that Ministers sometimes found him "difficult": perhaps the first sign of this in any high-class newspaper was a leading article in *The Times* of 24th November, 1936. The article was headed "The King and his Ministers." It referred in appreciative terms to a visit which His Majesty had just paid to some of the distressed districts in South Wales, and hinted at some apparent differences between the plans of the Government for dealing with the problem of the "Special Areas," as they came to be called, and some of His Majesty's public utterances. The article (which made no reference whatever to the gossip and rumours about the King's domestic life) contained the following significant passage:

But it is a wholly mischievous suggestion and one altogether alien to the spirit of the Constitution which would set his (i.e. the King's) well-known sympathy with the distressed, against the measures taken by the Government, and which by implication would drive a wedge between the Monarch and his Ministers, and to contrast his personal and representative concern for the wellbeing of a section of the people with the administrative steps of his advisers, is a constitutionally dangerous proceeding, and would threaten, if continued, to entangle the Throne in politics.

This article attracted great attention and was much discussed among members of the House of Commons, who drew from it confirmation of the rumours that relations between the King and his Ministers were causing difficulties. Still our Press continued its praiseworthy policy of excluding all reference to the King's domestic affairs. But just a week later the Bishop of Bradford, Dr. Blunt, on Tuesday, December 1st, gave his now well-known address to his Diocesan Conference. He dealt with and criticized proposals which had been put forward for alterations in the Coronation Ceremony: in doing so he spoke at some length about the position and duties of the King, of how these must affect and be concerned with his private and domestic life, and of his need for God's Grace, and said: "We hope that he (the King) is aware of his need. Some of us wish that he gave more positive signs of his awareness."

This Address was fully reported the following day in *The Times*, which drew special attention to it in a paragraph on the middle sheet, and on the next day, Thursday, December 3rd, *The Times* contained a leading article on "King and Monarchy," in which it was said that "the Bishop's remarkable Address let loose a flood of comments in the newspapers of Northern England,"

and elsewhere, which saw that the real justification of Dr. Blunt's remarks lay in certain statements which had appeared in reputable United States journals and even in some Dominion newspapers which could not be treated with indifference. Indeed, they could not, for the reticence of English newspapers up to that time had now become no longer possible, and the question of a possible marriage of the King and Mrs. Simpson and the Constitutional consequences of such a marriage were being widely discussed. It was no longer possible for Parliament to take no notice of all this, and on that same day, December 3rd, Mr. Attlee, Leader of the Opposition, asked the Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, in the House of Commons, after private notice, "Whether any Constitutional difficulties had arisen and whether he had any statement to make." The reply was: "I have no statement to make to-day. While there does not at present exist any Constitutional difficulty, the situation is of such a nature as to make it inexpedient that I should be questioned about it at this stage." Though supplementary questions were asked by Mr. Attlee and by Mr. Churchill, the Prime Minister courteously but firmly refused to add anything to his reply beyond an intimation that he had very much in mind the anxiety which was felt for further information as soon as possible. This sufficed to make everyone in the House realize that a critical position had arisen or at least was imminent. In fact, the Prime Minister had first seen the King on the matter on 20th October, and had had numerous subsequent interviews with him: but that was not generally known, and the story of what happened between 20th October and this 3rd December is not a matter to be gone into here; it is fully set out in the speech in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister on December 10th.

Between the 3rd and 10th, on which day the Prime Minister brought the King's Statement to the House, further questions were addressed to the Prime Minister every Parliamentary day, but with the exception of brief statements on the 6th and 7th the Prime Minister was unable to say more until on Wednesday, 9th, he informed the House that he hoped to make a statement next day.

During this anxious week the behaviour of the House left nothing to be desired. A few supplementary questions were addressed to the Prime Minister when he said he could say no more at present, which showed the anxiety felt; but on the whole the House refrained from pressing unduly for further

information. Many anxious conversations, however, took place between members and some serious discussions among various groups of members as to how a possibly difficult Constitutional situation could best be dealt with. As an example of this I may perhaps mention one small incident in which I was concerned. A member came to me and said that a group of members of all parties had been discussing the problem and had desired him to ask me if I would approach the Prime Minister and enquire whether anything like a scheme they had thought out for establishing a Council of Regency had been considered by the Government. I replied that he as representing the group should do it himself, but he said No, his friends specially wished me to do it, because my official position put me outside any political party or group, and desiring only to be helpful they were anxious that their suggestion should not be associated with any particular member or group of members. I tell this as typical of the kind of feeling which was general in the House. I said I would comply with the request. By a happy chance I met a few minutes later, in one of the corridors, Dugdale, the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, and told him what I had been asked to do. He told me that the Cabinet was sitting and was at that very moment considering a scheme of that kind; so I had the answer to the enquiry I had been asked to make, and at once got hold of my friend and reported to him.

As I have said, the Prime Minister on Wednesday, 9th, had said he hoped to make a statement on the following day, and on Thursday, 10th, in a packed House, he appeared at the bar with a message from the King which he handed to the Speaker, who read it to a silent and tensely anxious House, all members being, as is customary during a royal message, "uncovered." It took the House a few seconds to realize that His Majesty's determination to abdicate in favour of the next heir to the Throne, the Duke of York, and his request to Parliament to give effect to the Instrument of Abdication which he had signed, meant a solution of the Constitutional problem. The Prime Minister at once rose to move the formal resolution that His Majesty's most gracious message be now considered. He described simply and clearly his interviews with the King from October 20th up to the Tuesday, 8th December, and read the message he had sent to the King on Wednesday morning setting out at the Cabinet's request the message they desired him to send on learning of His Majesty's decision, and the King's reply stating that he was unable to alter

his decision. The King signed the Instrument of Abdication early on that morning, Thursday, 10th, and his message contained the full text of the document. Immediately after the Prime Minister resumed his seat, the sitting was suspended until 6 p.m. on the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition.

On the House resuming at 6 p.m. Mr. Attlee made a brief and statesmanlike speech in which he said the King had made his decision and that Parliament could not do otherwise than accept it. After a few other brief speeches, the Prime Minister's motion that the King's message be now considered was agreed to, he formally moved that leave be given to bring in the Abdication Bill, which was also agreed to, without debate, and he then brought in the Bill in the customary manner from the bar of the House. The following day, Friday, was fixed for the second reading and the House adjourned shortly before 7 p.m.

The following morning the House, as usual on a Friday, met at 11 a.m. The Chamber was full, but not so crowded as on the previous day, partly no doubt owing to the fact that many members who had weekend engagements in their constituencies felt it unnecessary now to remain in Town. The whole atmosphere was changed: there was an obvious feeling of relief from the anxiety of the last few days. No one showed this more than the Prime Minister, to whom indeed it must have been a tremendous relief to feel that his heavy and responsible task during the preceding seven or eight weeks was virtually at an end and that what remained to complete it was comparatively formal business.

Here perhaps is the place to mention a curious little incident which I think escaped the notice of most members. On the Order Paper for the day a number of private Bills were set down for consideration, the titles of which would be read out in the House by the Clerk, and it was my duty then to move the step for which each Bill was set down or to name a future date for it. Before the House met I as usual examined this list of Bills, and among them I found set down, of course by pure chance under arrangements made some days before, "Edinburgh Royal Maternity and Simpson Memorial Hospital Order Confirmation Bill." Realizing that the calling of this Bill might cause some rather unseemly laughter, I decided it must be postponed, and instructed the Clerk not to read out the title at all, telling the Speaker also what I had done. The Speaker not only approved, but went one

better by directing that no private Bill business at all should be taken that day.

Directly after the Speaker took the Chair the necessary motion was passed to suspend the Rule under which the House would rise at 4 or 4.30 p.m. This was merely a precaution to ensure that the House should be able to complete all stages of the Abdication Bill on that day. Then after certain formal business the Prime Minister rose at ten minutes past eleven to move the second reading of the Bill, which he did in a speech of only a very few minutes: brief speeches followed from Mr. Attlee and Sir Archibald Sinclair, who expressed the intention of the Labour and Liberal Parties respectively to support the Bill. Then the Speaker called on Mr. Maxton to move his reasoned amendment for rejection, notice of which had been handed in in manuscript. Briefly the effect of the amendment was to express a wish to terminate the Monarchy and establish a Republic. The debate on this lasted a little over an hour, and on a division the amendment was defeated by 403 to 5 and the Bill was read a second time. The House went at once into Committee on the Bill: I took the Chair: no amendments were proposed, but there was a little discussion on the one operative clause and on the schedule and the preamble, and I several times had to stop members from discussing irrelevant matters such as the Civil List and other financial matters. On the Bill being reported without amendment the Prime Minister moved the third reading, expressing in a few moving phrases the affection and regard felt for the King. Mr. Buchanan on behalf of those who had supported the amendment to the second reading expressed their dissent from the Bill, but said that having divided on the second reading they would not do so on the third reading. The third reading was then agreed to soon after 1.30 p.m. and the sitting was suspended until the Lords should have passed the Bill and the Commission should be ready to give the Royal Assent, which was done before 2 p.m., and the House then adjourned.

So, with the due passing into law of this Act, ended a situation which might well have caused a Constitutional crisis fraught with danger—and that, as time showed, not long before the country was faced with the greatest war in history. It must be borne in mind that there was no precedent for such an abdication by the reigning monarch, nor for dealing with the resulting situation, and no Constitutional machinery for changing the ruling monarch in his lifetime: the sovereign powers of Parliament are not

exercisable without the monarch who is an integral part of Parliament. When James II left the country and the Throne was declared vacant by the then members of Parliament, they had no Constitutional powers, and their action then, and subsequently when they called William and Mary to the throne, had no Constitutional validity: their actions were merely those of a "Convention," and steps were taken later to ratify their actions so far as possible by an Act of a new Parliament and with the assent of a *de facto* Sovereign who had really become so by conquest. The Country and the Dominions owe a deep debt of gratitude to King Edward VIII for the way in which he acted when he had finally determined to abdicate, and for his conduct in co-operating with Parliament and giving his Royal Assent to an Act of Parliament to make his abdication and the accession of his successor a valid and Constitutional proceeding. They may be grateful to him also for his avoiding appearing in public and for remaining in comparative seclusion during these weeks. But apart from the course taken by the King, the one person responsible for the satisfactory ending of the crisis was the Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Baldwin. The circumstances were such that, as the King's Chief Minister and adviser on affairs of State, he, and he alone, had to conduct the many interviews and negotiations with the King (and his successor), and from the nature of the case he had to bear this burden alone without sharing it with his ministerial colleagues. As Mr. Baldwin himself told the House of Commons, the Cabinet was never officially concerned in the matter until they were informed on December 9th of the King's definite decision to abdicate, except once at the very end of November or the 1st of December when at the King's request he asked the Cabinet to express their view as to a proposal that legislation should be passed to enable the King to marry the lady without her becoming Queen. On December 9th, the day before the King's message was delivered to, and read in, the House of Commons, the Cabinet having been made acquainted with and considered the King's decision, sent a message to him through the Prime Minister begging His Majesty to reconsider the matter, to which he replied that he was unable to alter his decision: the Prime Ministers of the Dominions were kept informed.

I do not think that any Prime Minister can ever have had a more difficult and anxious task. Prime Ministers in modern times have always had anxious and responsible work, especially in the two great wars: but there is no case on record comparable

with this in which the heavy burden had to be borne by one man alone. It was a fortunate circumstance that it fell to the lot of the one man who was above all others fitted to do it. Mr. Baldwin had for many years been on terms of intimate personal friendship with the Royal Family, and his influence with Edward VIII both before and after he succeeded to the Throne was considerable : his knowledge and understanding of that most difficult and mysterious subject the British Constitution was very great, and so also was his knowledge and understanding of the British people and their character : moreover, his frank and transparent honesty combined with patience and tact and firmness often described by those who differed from him as obstinacy, were called for and exercised by him to their fullest extent. Throughout those anxious eight or nine weeks he preserved in public a calm and unruffled demeanour and complete proper reticence. I believe that in saying this I am but recording the views of at least the great majority of Members of Parliament, and of others whose knowledge of affairs entitled them to express an opinion about him. My experience on the evening of the day the Abdication Bill was passed is, I think, worth recording : I had accepted several weeks before an invitation for that date by my great friend Sir Reginald Poole to one of his large private dinner parties which he occasionally gave at the Garrick Club : there were, I think, something like forty guests, nearly all of them men of some distinction or importance and for the most part lawyers or bankers or leading city merchants and financiers : praise of Mr. Baldwin's handling of the matter was universal : several of the company whom I knew well, and who had on other matters been opposed to or critical of Mr. Baldwin's doings, and had expressed their criticisms to me, came to me and said words to the effect, " I take back all I have ever said against Baldwin : if he has made mistakes in the past, his conduct of this business has wiped them all out and the Country and the Empire will always owe him a deep debt of gratitude."

Many people who do not usually take special interest in politics generally or in Constitutional questions in particular may well have failed to realize the gravity of the situation, or the difficulty of dealing with a matter which, after it was settled, seemed to them to have been easily and simply solved : such views may be understandable, but no one qualified to express an opinion of value on the subject would agree with them : to explain the matter fully would be too lengthy and complicated a matter

to embark upon here. One fact however may be worth calling to mind, namely that the Crown is now the one link which binds the great self-governing Dominions to the Mother Country. That link has since proved its strength : may that strength long continue and grow to the benefit of the Empire and Commonwealth of Nations and of the civilized world.

CHAPTER XXVI

MUNICH, 1938

PARLIAMENT rose for the autumn recess on July the 29th, 1938, the House of Commons being adjourned to the 1st of November, but with the provision, which had now become the usual practice, that they might at any time be recalled by the Speaker at short notice. The position in regard to Foreign affairs and the situation in Europe was then anything but satisfactory ; although Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, in his review of Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons on July the 26th, had expressed the opinion that the outlook was not quite so dark as it had been a short time before, it was by no means bright. The subject which appeared to attract most attention (it would not be incorrect to say excitement) in the House of Commons in the realm of Foreign Affairs was the civil war in Spain. The serious nature of the Sudeten Germans problem in Czecho-Slovakia had been obvious to the more serious observers since the previous April, and at times some of the less responsible bellicose type of politicians had been demanding that Germany should be warned against interfering in that question. But few of those who after Munich criticized the previous policy of the Government were then heard advocating the policy they later on said should have been adopted. The country as a whole did not seem to know or to care very much about the matter, and the popular view seemed to be that what might happen in Czecho-Slovakia was not our business, and that anyhow we should not risk getting involved in war for the sake of the Czechs. They did not realize the repercussions which might result from trouble there.

Before Parliament rose it had already been arranged that Lord Runciman with a small staff of advisers should go to Prague, not in any sense as an arbitrator, but as an investigator and mediator, to try, with the assent and goodwill of both the Czecho-Slovak Government and the Sudeten Germans, to assist in arranging a solution of the problem. His mission at first seemed to have prospects of success, but in fact, it was undertaken too late.

Quite early in August, the situation was menacing, and it rapidly became more and more so.

Unusually extensive military preparations took place in Germany early in the month and caused the British Government to give instructions to their Ambassador at Berlin to make representations to the German Government and to Hitler. Both in this country and in France, the people were by now feeling very anxious, and that anxiety was not allayed by references to the matter contained in a speech at Lanark by Sir John Simon on the 27th of August. In France, too, there was feverish anxiety, though the French Press contained many statements to the effect that France was no longer bound to give assistance to Czecho-Slovakia and that there was no justification for Frenchmen being sacrificed to keep a lot of Germans under Czecho-Slovak rule.

- Early in September the great Nazi Congress was being held at Nuremberg, and Hitler made violent speeches to the Congress about the necessity of helping the Sudeten Germans, especially one on September the 12th at the closing of the Congress. On the previous day, the British Government had authorized a statement in the Press pointing out that this country would inevitably be involved in any conflict which might endanger France, and continued—It is of the utmost importance that Germany should make no mistake about it; she cannot with impunity carry out a rapid and successful campaign against Czecho-Slovakia without fear of intervention by France and even Great Britain. But France was in fact in no position to go to war, and on September the 12th her Government definitely decided to adopt a policy of compromise.

On September the 14th, the Prime Minister, after having discussed matters with Runciman and with Sir Neville Henderson, who had been summoned home for consultation, decided to try what he could do by personal contact with Hitler. In response to the Prime Minister's suggestion, Hitler agreed to see him at Berchtesgaden on the following day, and the Prime Minister therefore flew to Munich, and went by train from there to Berchtesgaden. It was his first journey by air, and his conduct in taking this drastic step was received by the public with general approval, and indeed with admiration, especially from some of us who knew his dislike of the idea of flying. A story showing his dislike of flying is worth recording. He was a very keen fisherman and when on a short fishing holiday in Scotland he had to return to London, his host, a distinguished personage and a great flying man, urged him to stay for another day, offering to send him back

to London in his private aeroplane. But he begged to be excused saying that he would prefer to lose a day's fishing rather than to travel by air!

A week after Berchtesgaden came the Prime Minister's second meeting with Hitler, this time at Godesberg on the Rhine. Then the House of Commons was recalled and met again on Wednesday the 28th of September when war seemed inevitable. The Prime Minister made a statement to the House, on the European situation, directly the House met, members having in the meantime been supplied with a White Paper setting out the salient facts and the principal documents. The House was very full and listened with keen attention and anxiety to the Prime Minister's speech, which occupied nearly an hour and a half, and was to have a most dramatic and unexpected ending.

The Prime Minister first narrated the chief events, and the many meetings, conversations and conferences which had taken place up to the evening of September the 14th, when as he said "a highly critical situation had developed in which there was immediate danger" of an outbreak of fighting on the Czecho-Slovak frontier. Then came his story of his decision to interview Hitler personally, of his journey to Berchtesgaden where he had a three-hour conversation with the dictator. He told how the conversation had resulted in Hitler's saying that on the assurance that the British Government accepted the principle of self-determination, he would be quite ready to discuss ways and means of carrying it out, and that on the Prime Minister undertaking to return at once to consult with his colleagues he (Hitler) would refrain from active hostilities until the Prime Minister had had time to obtain the reply from his colleagues. He went on to tell of his return to London the following day, his meeting with the Cabinet and Lord Runciman (specially recalled from Prague for the purpose), of their meeting on the following Sunday the 18th with the French Ministers, Daladier and Bonnet, who flew over from Paris for the meeting, and of the communications which followed with the Czecho-Slovak Government. Then after describing the additional complications brought about by the pressing of the claims of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czecho-Slovakia, he told of his further visit to Hitler, at Godesberg, on September the 22nd. This visit covered two personal interviews with Hitler, at the second of which the German Foreign Secretary and Sir Neville Henderson (our Ambassador at Berlin) and Sir Horace Wilson were present, and some written com-

munications passed between the Prime Minister and Hitler between the two interviews. He told too of a few words which he had in private with Hitler before leaving, when Hitler had reiterated that this was the last of his territorial ambitions in Europe, and his desires for friendship with England when the Sudeten question was got out of the way. He returned, he said, to London on the 24th, bringing with him a memorandum which he had received from Hitler just before leaving. That memorandum he found, when he read it, anything but satisfactory or hopeful and it was found by both Czecho-Slovakia and France to be unacceptable. As a last effort to preserve peace, continued the Prime Minister, he sent Sir Horace Wilson on the 26th with a personal message to Hitler. He had received a letter in reply about 10.30 p.m. on the 27th, and both the Prime Minister's letter to Hitler and the reply were printed in the White Paper. Hitler's reply, in the Prime Minister's opinion, contained passages which were to some extent reassuring, so much so that the Prime Minister, as he said, "felt impelled to send him one more last letter—the last last," which he read to the House; at the same time he had sent a message to Mussolini which he also read to the House, requesting him to support the proposal for a conference contained in his letter to Hitler. He had just heard, he said, that Mussolini had asked Hitler to postpone action, which Hitler had intended to take at 2 p.m. that day, for twenty-four hours to enable him (Mussolini) to re-examine the situation, and that Hitler in reply had agreed to postpone mobilization for twenty-four hours.

This slight gleam of hope brought right up to date the not very hopeful story the Prime Minister had to tell the House—a story the House heard with anxiety and little hope. The Prime Minister was finishing with a word in acknowledgment of Mussolini's gesture of willingness to work for peace, when the dramatic conclusion followed.

Sir John Simon handed to the Prime Minister a sheet of paper he had just received from Lord Halifax's secretary. The Prime Minister, still standing at the box, paused to read it in dead silence. Then resuming his speech he said, "That is not all, I have something further to say to the House yet." He then stated he had "now been informed by Herr Hitler" that he (Hitler) invited him to meet him at Munich to-morrow morning; that Hitler had also invited Mussolini and Daladier, that Mussolini had accepted, that Daladier would no doubt also accept

and, said the Prime Minister, "I need not say what my answer will be." Expressing the relief which all would feel that the crisis was again postponed to give one more opportunity to settle the problem, he said, "Mr. Speaker, I cannot say any more. I am sure the House will be ready to release me now to go and see what I can make of this last effort," and after suggesting an adjournment for a few days, he resumed his seat.

The whole House rose, cheering and waving papers—not the orthodox House of Commons "Hear, hears!" but real hearty cheers in which, regardless of regulations and custom, strangers in the gallery joined. As soon as he could be heard, Mr. Attlee, expressing the welcome which the whole House gave to the Prime Minister's last statement and the hopes it aroused, said his party would agree to adjourn at once, and hoped that when they met again in a few days the war clouds might have lifted. A few sentences in a like strain followed from Sir Archibald Sinclair, Mr. Maxton, and Mr. Lansbury, and when the one Communist member, Mr. Gallacher, had expressed his general disapproval of the Government and all its works, the House adjourned until the following Monday. As the Prime Minister walked out behind the Chair, the whole House cheered him again, and members broke up into small groups expressing their relief and hope at this unexpected development. Everyone seemed both pleased and hopeful, and there was a general feeling of confidence in the result of this last effort for peace. No one on that day appeared to criticize the Prime Minister's actions, nor on that day was anything heard of those who afterwards spoke and wrote so bitterly of the "Men of Munich." The general feeling throughout the country was one of relief, of confident hope, and of sincere admiration for and gratitude to the Prime Minister. None the less, there were people who were not in sympathy with this general feeling, but were critical of the Government's policy, and their opinions were expressed in the debate the following week after the Prime Minister's return. But for the moment little attention was paid to them. A conversation I heard in a club a few days later illustrates amusingly the two points of view: said one man, "I see no cause for satisfaction: Neville is just being fooled by Hitler: Germany means to go to war, and whatever Neville may have done or may do, war is certain." One of his hearers replied, "You may be right. There is one thing which is certain for all of us: that is death some day: I mean to put off my death as long as I can, but if you want to die now because you must do so

some day, I'll attend your funeral with pleasure as soon as you like ! ”

On September the 29th, the day following that on which the House had met as above described, the Prime Minister was at Munich, in conference with Hitler, Mussolini, and Daladier. On Saturday the 1st of October, he arrived back in London. On September the 29th an agreement had been settled, and signed by those four representatives of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, and it remained for the Government of Czecho-Slovakia to accept or reject it: it was at once communicated to that Government, whose representatives were, by arrangement, at hand in the same building while the negotiations were going on, and on the following day, September the 30th, after lengthy consideration, they accepted it. For the moment, I do not go further into what happened at Munich or Prague or the effect of the agreement: for the present it is sufficient to record that the agreement was so made and accepted. Indeed, so far as the vast majority of people in this country were concerned, that was all that mattered, and the publication of the news was received with great relief and joy: nor were those feelings confined to this country alone: even in Germany the mass of the people did not want war: the Prime Minister on his previous visits to Germany had been cordially welcomed as he passed through, and on this occasion he received a great ovation from the people in the streets of Munich. On his arrival back in this country, he was greeted with immense enthusiasm at Heston Aerodrome and all the way to and in London. But all the time there were, as already intimated above, people who did not approve of what had been done, and rumours were being spread about that the Cabinet was far from united in his support: as subsequently appeared, the only foundation for these rumours was the disapproval by Mr. Duff Cooper, then First Lord of the Admiralty, who had for some time shown himself to be out of sympathy with his colleagues: at the meeting of the Cabinet held on the day of the Prime Minister's return, he tendered his resignation which was promptly accepted, but notwithstanding rumours, no further resignations took place.

When the House met again on the Monday, October the 3rd, before the business of the day was commenced, Duff Cooper, in accordance with the usual custom, made a personal explanation in regard to his resignation, stating at some length the views which he held: he was listened to with attention and respect, as a retiring

Minister always is on such occasions : only once was he interrupted, and then in a polite and orderly way, when he complained that one result of the Munich arrangement was " we have committed ourselves to defend a frontier in Central Europe." Sir Henry Croft (as he then was) interjected, " It is what you have been asking for."

The whole tenor of the speech seemed to justify this interruption as true : but Duff Cooper's reply was, " We are guaranteeing a frontier we have at the same time destroyed." While the vast majority of the House disagreed with Duff Cooper's views, he personally deserved and received the sympathy of the whole House : on account of opinions he honestly held he had given up a great position. His friends, from whom he differed on this occasion, were glad a few years later to welcome him back to high office. After all, in this country, honesty is the best policy, even in politics.

At the conclusion of Duff Cooper's explanation, the Chief Whip at once formally moved the adjournment to enable the Prime Minister to make his statement. The Prime Minister first spoke of the respect and sympathy felt for Mr. Duff Cooper, but excused himself from replying to his strictures on the Government's policy, saying that those things would be dealt with in the course of the coming debate : he spoke of the general feeling of relief and gladness which had replaced the anxieties of the preceding week, and paid a simple but graceful tribute to his colleagues and especially to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, who had been so specially concerned with the recent events.

Passing then to his main theme, he briefly referred to the position prior to the Munich meeting and to the unacceptable Godesberg Memorandum, which he described as in fact an ultimatum with a time limit of six days : the Munich Agreement, he said, reverted to the Anglo-French plan (which the Czecho-Slovak Government had felt compelled to agree to) and laid down conditions for the application thereof under international supervision : the evacuation of territory to be occupied by Germany was to be carried out in five stages, between the 1st and the 10th of October, instead of by the 1st of October, and the line bounding such occupation was to be fixed by an international commission instead of being a line marked on the map by the Godesberg Memorandum : all the plebiscite areas were to be fixed by the International Commission, and other details were to be settled by the Commission instead of being dictated. More-

over, the new Czecho-Slovak frontiers were to be guaranteed by Great Britain and France, and also by Germany and Italy when the questions of the Polish and Hungarian minorities were settled, and if they were not settled within three months by the Governments concerned, another meeting of the Powers was to be held to consider them: the Munich arrangement also contained valuable provisions, not in the Godesberg Memorandum, such as options to pass into Czech territory and several other matters, with a general provision for references to the Commission instead of completion by the 1st of October. The Prime Minister then told of the arrangements made for financial help to the Czecho-Slovak Government, and the immediate advance to them by the British Government of £10,000,000.

Before concluding his speech, the Prime Minister defended himself against Duff Cooper's references to a personal conversation he had with Hitler on the Friday morning before he left Munich, and the declaration which he and Hitler had made containing three paragraphs, briefly to the effect (1) that the question of Anglo-German relations was of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe, (2) that they regarded the new Agreement and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of the two people never to go to war with one another again, and (3) that consultation should be the method of dealing with any questions between the two countries, and their determination to continue their efforts to remove differences and contribute to assuring the peace of Europe.

The debate continued for two full days, during which most of the prominent opponents and critics of the Government policy addressed the House: occasionally a certain amount of heat was shown, but most of the critics of the Government seemed to find difficulty, much as they opposed the Government policy and deplored the terms of the settlement, in showing how any other course could have succeeded in averting war, and for the most part they acknowledged their satisfaction that war had been averted. The debate was further continued for a third and fourth day on Wednesday the 5th and on Thursday the 6th. At the opening of the Wednesday debate, Sir John Simon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, moved a resolution approving the Government Policy in the recent crisis, and supporting their efforts to secure a lasting peace. Mr. Arthur Greenwood moved an amendment, which while expressing relief that war had been averted for the time being, condemned the policy of the Government, which had "led

to the sacrifice of Czecho-Slovakia," the humiliation of, and grave danger to, this country, and demanding support of collective security through the League of Nations, and immediate steps for summoning a world conference. In course of this and the following day (as indeed on both the two preceding days) several notable and really good speeches were made on both sides. Mr. Churchill, on this Wednesday, put the position of himself and many other critics of the Government very clearly: while acknowledging the recent great efforts of the Prime Minister, and the relief that he and others felt at the success that had attended those efforts, he roundly condemned the policy of the Government prior to the immediate crisis. Like other Conservative critics, he abstained from voting when the division came.

The Prime Minister wound up the debate in a speech of nearly three-quarters of an hour. It would be difficult to give a brief summary of it: it was marked by his usual personal modesty, an earnest sincere conviction that his action was right, that no one else who might have been in his position could have taken a different course, and a lucid exposition of the circumstances: in course of the speech he reminded his hearers of certain facts which many of his critics had apparently overlooked, or to which they had not given sufficient consideration, that the self-governing Dominions had to be remembered, that opinion of the mass of the British people was against starting war to prevent Sudeten Germans joining the Reich, that we had no treaty with or legal obligations to Czecho-Slovakia, that our only obligations were to France—that we had constantly and clearly affirmed that we would comply with those obligations if France through her treaty obligations to Czecho-Slovakia should become involved in a war with Germany.

Then came the division—or rather divisions—the first being on the question that the words which the amendment proposed should be left out, should stand part of the motion, the second being on the Government motion in its original form. The figures in the two divisions were nearly the same, in the first 369 to 150, and in the second 366 to 144, the difference probably resulting from the fact that a few members hurried away after the first division, perhaps to catch trains or for some similar reason. The divisions were on strict party lines, with some 12 to 20 Conservative critics of the Government intentionally abstaining from voting. The House then adjourned, but before members left the Chamber, the Prime Minister again received a great

ovation : first some of his colleagues on the Government bench shook hands with him, and they were followed by a crowd of private members also coming and shaking his hand. I was sitting in my usual place in the House, when not in the Chair, that is at the far end of the front bench near the Speaker's Chair. I remember thinking and remarking to a member near me, " Why can't they let the poor fellow alone, instead of putting him through all this handshaking ". By that time he had managed to get away to go out behind the Chair when, to my surprise, as he was passing me he stopped and held out his hand to shake hands with me, with some remark to the effect " Well, that is a good finish."

It was decided that the House should adjourn again on the Thursday evening, the 6th of October, until the 1st of November, subject again to the provision enabling the House to be recalled earlier if necessary.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, 1939

I NEARLY started to write this chapter last night. But I am glad I did not, for the result is that I now sit down to do so early on the morning of Sunday the 3rd of September, 1944: it is as far as I am concerned entirely accidental and unpremeditated that I should be doing this on the 5th anniversary of that Sunday, the 3rd of September, 1939, on which I was present at that historic meeting of the House of Commons, which I have to describe. I was looking forward to a day of leisure to-day, but the temptation to start this chapter on this day is too great! How different from 1939! As I write this, there comes a now familiar roar, and I look up out of the window to see, going over my house, seventy-two of our aeroplanes on their way out to—"somewhere" on the Continent: more went over earlier, and more still will be going in the next hour or so: I calculate that more will go over here to-day than the total number we possessed twelve months before the War began.

On that 3rd of September, 1939, I was in my room in the House of Commons soon after 10 a.m., and by 11 a.m. most of the members were in the building ready for the sitting of the House at 12 noon. We knew we should then hear the formal announcement that we were at war with Germany. Soon after 11 a.m. came the first warning from the sirens, and everyone went down into the rooms and corridors on the terrace level, which had been strengthened and prepared as air-raid shelters; members then had not become familiar with all the refuges: everybody crowded into the corridor and rooms along the passage between the Harcourt room and the next staircase: it was an interesting crowd, members of all sorts, officials and clerks, messengers, kitchen and refreshment department staffs, several peeresses, other ladies and strangers with gallery tickets, pressmen and others all packed so closely that it was difficult to move about. A few—very few—seemed nervous, but the majority were quite calm, and many in an almost gay mood. So we waited some half-hour for the sound of bombs! But no bombing came and the "all-clear" was sounded before the sitting commenced at noon. I believe it was a false alarm due to some friendly aeroplanes being mistaken for hostile ones. But I must go back a little.

It is intended here to deal only with the emergency sittings of the House of Commons between August the 24th and October the 5th, but it is necessary to refer briefly to some earlier events in order to make a reasonably intelligible and complete story. To those who want fuller information about those events in the two years before the War, I would commend that interesting, lucid, and easily readable book *The Failure of a Mission*, by the late Sir Neville Henderson, who was our Ambassador at Berlin from May 1937 till the War began.

Since the Munich agreement of September 1938, the Government had been pushing on rearmament and preparations for war in all directions—notably in the matter of Civil Defence. German designs on Poland had caused anxiety quite early in the year, and the British Government undertook to give assistance to Poland in the event of any threat to her independence which might involve that country's resistance with her forces: France too gave a similar guarantee, and our resolve to resist further aggression was repeatedly made clear to Germany. Italy, meanwhile, had been following German methods, and having on Good Friday, April the 7th, invaded Albania, had overrun that little country and set up there an Italian Government. Threats to the safety of Greece and Roumania led to declarations by the British Government to those countries similar to the guarantee they had given to Poland, and a definite attempt was made by this country and France to build up what was called a "Peace Front" in Europe to resist aggression.

The House of Commons rose for the autumn recess on August the 4th, and four days before that, on the 31st of July, a debate took place in Committee of Supply on the international situation. With the exception of a brief discussion of the situation in the Far East which took place on the motion for adjournment on August the 4th, this was the last debate on Foreign Affairs before the House met again on the 24th of August, when recalled on account of the state of emergency. In part, this debate was one of the most unfortunate debates of its kind on Foreign Affairs which I ever remember to have heard in the House of Commons. It was commenced by Sir Archibald Sinclair, who had put down a motion for reduction of the vote for the salaries and expenses of the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary's salary: he was followed by Mr. Dalton for the Labour Party: both of them made attacks on the Prime Minister who at once rose and replied to them, leaving the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, R. A.

Butler, to wind up the debate after about a dozen other speeches had been made. A certain amount of heat and bad temper was apparent at times, and members seemed to have forgotten the reticence and care which are often necessary in discussing international affairs; the Government was clearly in a difficulty by reason of their not being able to disclose fully some details of negotiations and discussions with other countries which were going on at the time: there were certainly many unwise things said in course of the debate which ranged over a very wide area, the European situation from many aspects, Russia, the Far East, and the United States of America.

When the recalled House met on Thursday the 24th of August, the Prime Minister moved a motion to expedite the passing of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill, and in doing so made a statement as to the grave position in Europe: he gave an account of what had occurred down to the preceding Tuesday, August the 22nd, when the extensive military preparations in Germany, and their movement towards the Polish frontier, caused the Government to call Parliament together again. This firm and lucid but grave statement led to the two Opposition leaders, Mr. Greenwood (deputizing for Mr. Attlee, who was indisposed) and Sir Archibald Sinclair, expressing approbation and promising the support of their respective parties. After a brief further debate in which Mr. Lansbury stated the pacifist point of view, the Prime Minister's motion was carried on a division by 427 votes to 4: the minority 6 (including their two tellers) was made up in equal parts of the 3 I.L.P. members and 3 acknowledged and conscientious pacifists. The House then proceeded with the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill, which was passed through all stages in a little over three hours: the Bill was agreed to by the House of Lords and received the Royal Assent that night.

The House then adjourned to the following Thursday, subject to the possibility of being recalled earlier, and it was in fact recalled on the following Tuesday, the 29th, to hear a statement by the Prime Minister, and again on Friday, the 1st of September, from when it sat every day except on Monday the 4th, up to and including Thursday the 7th, and in those six sittings both Houses of Parliament passed through all stages and obtained the Royal Assent to no less than forty-one Emergency Acts of Parliament, in addition to the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, which enabled Orders and Regulations to be made about many things for war-time purposes. Six more emergency Acts were similarly passed before

the end of the month. At the beginning of the sitting on that Friday, the 1st of September, a White Paper had been made available to members, setting out the communications with the German Government up to the previous evening, and the Prime Minister in a statement he then made referring thereto, told the House of the interview which the Polish Ambassador had with Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Secretary, the previous night: the Ambassador had expressed his country's willingness to negotiate, the only answer to which was the invasion of Poland that very morning at dawn by the German Army and the bombing of open Polish towns: that, of course, meant war, in which we and France were involved: but on this occasion the Prime Minister did not intend there should be any ground for stating that England started the War: the British and French Ambassadors, as he announced, had been instructed to hand to the German Government a document which he read to the House: this document, after placing on record the proclamation addressed that morning to the German Army, the crossing of the Polish frontier and the attacks on Polish towns, and stating that these facts called for the implementation of the British and French obligations to Poland, stated that in default of suspension of this aggression and the withdrawal of German troops from Poland, the British Government would fulfil their obligations to Poland. He went on to say that "if a reply to this last warning is unfavourable, and I do not suggest that it is likely to be otherwise, His Majesty's Ambassador is instructed to ask for his passports." He stated that the previous day the Government took further steps to complete preparations for defence, and that they had on this morning ordered complete mobilization of the Naval, Military, and Air Forces and had taken the final steps in accordance with prearranged plans. Mr. Arthur Greenwood, speaking on behalf of the Labour Party, followed with an admirably patriotic speech, in which though appearing to suggest that the leaving of "another loophole" giving Germany an opportunity of withdrawal was unnecessary, described the Prime Minister's words as "firm" and stated that the Labour Party would call upon all its members to stand solidly behind the Government in resistance to aggression. Sir Archibald Sinclair, on behalf of the Liberal Opposition, also spoke approvingly of the Prime Minister's speech, and promised support. The Prime Minister's motion for facilitating the passing of the Emergency Bills was then agreed to and the House proceeded to pass them accordingly. Some questions were asked

and brief discussions took place on some of them, but in all cases they were passed without opposition, and the House adjourned shortly before midnight till the next day.

On the following day, Saturday, the House went on with further Emergency Bills commencing with the National Service (Armed Forces) Bill, which among other things provided for the enlistment for service of all men between 18 and 41, with the exception of exempted classes such as Ministers of Religion: this Bill was debated on the second reading for just over an hour and was carried on a division by 340 to 7: the minority of 9 (including two tellers) was composed for the most part of the same members as in the division on August the 4th, on the motion for facilitating the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill, with the addition of certain members who did not vote in the first of the two divisions. The remaining business of the day's programme was completed without opposition by 6.30 p.m. when the sitting was suspended until the Prime Minister could be present to make a statement as had been promised earlier in the day. The sitting was resumed at a quarter to eight, when the Prime Minister made a very brief statement of the events of the preceding twenty-four hours. In effect what he said was, that our Ambassador was still awaiting a reply to the communication made by the British and French Governments: the delay might be due to a proposal believed to have been made to Hitler by Mussolini for a Five Power Conference: though the Government might agree to a Conference if Germany complied with the demand for her withdrawal from Poland, they were in communication with the French Government as to a limit of time for the German reply. He also referred to certain action which had been taken by Danzig Authorities which, and the effect given thereto by the German Government, could not be recognized as valid. Mr. Greenwood said he believed the whole House was "perturbed by the Prime Minister's statement," and deprecated the delay in taking action, and Sir Archibald Sinclair felt that an immediate reply must be required, though it was, he said, vital to keep in step with our French Allies. The Prime Minister replied that the Government was in a difficult position owing to the necessity of communication with the French Government by telephone, but assured the House of his anxiety that the issue should be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible, and said he anticipated that there was only one answer which he would be able to give the House to-morrow.

Although many of the cooler-headed members of the House

realized that the Prime Minister saw, and would not unnecessarily destroy, a sort of 1,000 to 1 chance that Hitler's move might be retracted, and trusted the Prime Minister not to go back on his statements, the general feeling among members after the House rose was one of dissatisfaction: as may be supposed, those who had all along been hostile to the Prime Minister and critical of his policy were loud in their cries that we were being let down: but apart from them, many of his most loyal supporters were anxious and worried: much as they disliked the idea of war, they had in the last two or three days become reconciled to the fact that it could not be avoided, and they now thought that delay in making the definite decision was not merely a waste of time which might be harmful, but was ground for an uncomfortable suspicion that the Government was trying to get out of the obligations which had been entered into.

It is not too much therefore to say that the Prime Minister's statement pleased no one—unless it were the half-dozen or so extreme pacifists in the House—and that members awaited the sitting at noon next day with deep anxiety, and a determination that there must then be no further delay.

But when the Sunday morning came there was a slightly improved feeling, and when members crowded into the Chamber just before 12 noon, they all knew that we should hear a definite and formal declaration of war. At 11 a.m. the Prime Minister had broadcast a speech in which he announced that as from 11 a.m. we were at war with Germany. The fact was borne into everyone's mind when a few minutes later the sirens sounded the first air-raid warning of the War. Most of the members were already in the precincts of the House before that, and when the warning was sounded went into the refuges. Before noon, the "all-clear" signal having been given, the House was full.

After an announcement of a message from the Lords that they had agreed to certain Emergency Bills, and that they had passed others, and the formal introduction of further Bills, came a Business Motion in the Prime Minister's name, on which he rose and made his very brief but important statement. Having expressed his sympathy with members in their feelings of doubt and bewilderment on his statement of the previous evening, he said that what he had to say would show that there were no grounds for doubt, that the Government had been in consultation with the French Government all the previous day, and that instructions had been given to the French and British Ambassadors

to hand to the German Foreign Secretary that morning (Sunday), at 9 a.m. a communication which he read to the House. The effect of it was that unless satisfactory assurances were received in London from the German Government by 11 a.m. British Summer Time, as required by our communication of the 1st inst., a state of war would exist between the two countries. "And so," said the Prime Minister, no such assurance having been given, "we are at war." There was, he said, only one thing left for him to do, to devote what strength and powers he had to forwarding the victory of our cause. He concluded, "I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established." That as we all know was not to be.

Mr. Greenwood, who followed the Prime Minister, said the atmosphere of the House had changed overnight, and that the resentment, apprehension, and anger of last night had changed to relief, composure, and resolution: that was the keynote of most of the few subsequent speeches, until the Prime Minister appealed to the House to bring the debate to a close and get on with the immense amount of work to be done. His appeal was completely successful except that before the House passed on to the work to be done, the irrepressible Mr. Gallacher said he wanted to make a statement which he considered necessary: he said, "I want to declare . . . that I will not come into conflict with the policy of my working-class comrades of the Soviet Union." His statement "it is necessary that I should make such a declaration as that" was greeted with amused and wondering cries of "Why?"

The House then went into Committee, and proceeded with the remainder of the Emergency business on the Order paper for the day: they completed it shortly before 5 p.m. and adjourned till the usual meeting time on the following day.

So ended the historic Sunday sitting on the day which saw the formal commencement of the War.

Notwithstanding the serious events of the day, there was a general feeling of relief that the period of anxious waiting was over, and a belief that we had acted rightly, which aroused an almost cheerful feeling of determination and confidence in the ultimate result.

Mr. Chamberlain had at once reconstructed his Government and in place of the Cabinet of 23 he formed a War Cabinet of 10. Among the principal changes, Mr. Churchill became a member of the Government as First Lord of the Admiralty (and a member of the War Cabinet) in place of Lord Stanhope, who became Lord

President of the Council ; Lord Hankey became a member of the War Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio, Mr. Eden joined the Government as Secretary for the Dominions in place of Sir Thomas Inskip, who became Lord Chancellor as Lord Caldecote, and Lord Macmillan took the new office of Minister of Information. The other changes were for the most part changes from one office to another or changes in the lower offices, and perhaps do not call for special mention, except that Sir John Anderson became Home Secretary in place of Sir Samuel Hoare, and Minister of Home Security, Sir Samuel Hoare becoming Lord Privy Seal. The inclusion of Mr. Churchill in the Government and the War Cabinet had been generally foreseen. Earlier in the year an anti-government campaign of propaganda had been engineered "demanding" that he should be given office in the Government : there were in the Conservative Party many prominent and experienced members who apart from recognizing that it was essential to allow a Prime Minister to select colleagues of his own choosing, had no sympathy with the proposal : but I think every one of them both thought and said, "If we become involved in War, it will be a different matter, and in that event he is pretty certain to be a member of the Government." About three weeks later—on September the 26th—he made his first speech in the House of Commons after taking office, and told the story of our naval operations in the anti-U-boat campaign during the first weeks of the War. It was the first of those many war-time speeches of his which have done so much to encourage, and to promote, the unity of our people, while at the same time warning us against over-sanguine optimism. Having spoken of how *some* of the U-boat commanders had done their best to behave with humanity, and of the German captain who had signalled to him the exact position where a British ship had been sunk, he delighted us with one of his whimsical touches : the German captain had signed the message "German Submarine" : "I was in some doubt at the time," said Mr. Churchill, "as to what address I should direct the reply to. However, he is now in our hands, and is treated with all consideration."

Except for two long weekend breaks, the House of Commons continued these emergency sittings until October the 5th. It dealt entirely with matters arising from the outbreak of war, including many emergency war-time Bills, several Orders made under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, and from September the 27th onwards, it was concerned almost entirely with the War

Emergency Budget and the Finance (No. 2) Bill founded thereon. There were, however, several long and important debates, during September one about Evacuation, one about the Ministry of Supply, and four on the War Situation. All these four War Situation debates commenced with statements by the Prime Minister made in pursuance of his promise to the House to make weekly statements; they were all made on motions for the adjournment: the first of such statements was one which he made on the 7th of September, in reply to a question by Mr. Greenwood, and was not followed by a general debate, but only by a few supplementary questions and replies thereto by the Prime Minister. The debate which followed the Prime Minister's statement on the 13th dealt very largely with complaints about the working of the Ministry of Information, the Censorship, and the release of, or restrictions on, news issued to the Press, complaints for which there was considerable justification: demands for news, and on the other hand the need of secrecy in some matters, and the number of Government Departments concerned in many questions created much difficulty until effective methods could be devised. Only two nights before a rather ridiculous situation had arisen: an authorized statement had been issued to the Press giving news of the landing of British Forces in France: then the War Office or some other Government Department decided that this news should not be published: it was too late, many papers had been already sent out—and many more printed—containing the statement; desperate efforts were made to stop further distribution, and in a most unfortunate way, police being sent to newspaper offices to seize copies of the papers, and newspaper vans being held up in the streets: a few hours later the statement was again released. All the Government could do in the debate was to plead the difficulties of the times, and promise (through Sir Samuel Hoare, who as Lord Privy Seal was representing the Ministry of Information) that such things should not happen again. I do not think such a bad blunder was made again, though I remember reading on the tape, a little later, two curious items: the first timed about 9.30 a.m. was in the nature of an announcement that a Royal Personage had left London for some place in the country, while the second stated that this 9.30 announcement was cancelled by order of the Censor!

Such things were no doubt sometimes inevitable, but it is remarkable how little trouble or fuss was made about them by the people affected.

For reasons of space, apart from other considerations, it is impossible to refer even briefly to all the important and interesting things done and said in the House of Commons during the six weeks of these emergency sittings. Apart from a few subjects which have been, or will be, referred to, a few general observations may be made.

The House may be said to have done very well during this period. They showed, generally, unity in support of the Government. There was criticism when occasion for it arose, as in the case mentioned above, but not of an unfair nature: "Questions" were less numerous than in normal times; they were usually interesting and were dealt with sympathetically by Ministers and often elicited useful and interesting information; and most speeches were short. The immense amount of emergency legislation did not go through without some consideration, for points were raised, questions asked, and discussions took place on many of the Bills. There were, I think, no divisions during the whole period, other than those already referred to in the earlier part of this chapter, except one on the Budget Resolution relating to the sugar tax and three in Committee on the Finance No. 2 Bill, which will be mentioned later on.

The House, and indeed the whole country, has reason to be grateful to Arthur Greenwood for his speeches and his conduct generally during this period as Deputy Leader of the Labour Party. His speeches were well delivered, thoroughly patriotic, and a model of discretion, yet he never in any way let down his party, nor did he refrain from temperate and reasonable criticism when he thought it was called for. My friend, Attlee, the Leader of the Party, whose work and conduct in Parliament since he recovered from the indisposition which kept him away from these sittings has so immensely increased his reputation, will, I am sure, not misunderstand me when I express my opinion that neither Parliament nor his party suffered from his absence at this time, when he had such an excellent deputy to take his place. Sir Archibald Sinclair worthily expressed the views of his Liberal followers, and resisted all temptation to indulge in those powerful denunciations of the Government which he had to all appearance so much enjoyed making previously. Mr. Stokes, however, still found it difficult not to say unkind things from time to time, about guns and other matters to which he pays so much attention. Mr. Gallacher talked of Russia whenever he could, and gave one the impression that if he were the dictator of the Soviet Union,

the British Government would have had no difficulty in negotiating with that country but would have long ago been able to form a close alliance with them.

It was understood that leaders of both the Labour Party and the Liberal Opposition were invited to take office in the Government, but that in both cases they thought that, for the time being, they could render better service by remaining outside, though giving general support to the Government in the prosecution of the War.

Before the end of September, an electoral truce was arranged by the Whips of the different parties, to continue for the period of the War unless or until terminated by one of them: the arrangement was that on a vacancy occurring, the candidate of the party to which the late member belonged should not be opposed by a candidate put up by either of the other parties.

Evacuation from London of children, mothers with babies and expectant mothers and some other classes of invalids or people suffering from some form of incapacity was commenced on September the 1st in accordance with plans arranged long before; and within a very few days upwards of a million people, mostly children, were moved into the country. Many troubles of various kinds quickly arose, complaints being made both about the evacuated persons by the persons on whom they were billeted and vice versa: this was no doubt inevitable: the long debate on the subject which took place on the 14th of September brought out many stories of unfortunate cases, but the fact that the large evacuation had been carried out was a great achievement, and many of the difficulties were fairly soon remedied. The debate was useful in bringing to light numerous cases where action of some kind was urgently called for, and the Ministry of Health was able to do some good and useful work: but the debate at times produced a good deal of excitement and wrangling.

Apart from naval and air activity, actual war affected this country very little, except indirectly, for quite a long time, with the result that much improvement was effected in Civil Defence Services and in general preparation and organization of the civil population before the testing time arrived.

On Wednesday, the 27th of September, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir John Simon) brought in his Emergency Budget in Committee of Ways and Means: his speeches are always remarkable for their lucidity, and the one he made on this occasion was no exception to that rule.

It will be remembered that on September the 3rd the House passed a Vote of Credit for 500 million pounds: but that only placed the amount to the credit of the Government, and did not provide for how the money was to be found. Moreover, as the Chancellor had warned the House, it could not be assumed that such 500 million pounds would be enough for the remainder of the financial year, and it was certain that one effect of the War would be to reduce substantially the yield of existing taxes, so that the revenue for the year would not suffice to meet the expenditure which had been estimated for the year in the Annual Budget of the previous April.

Everyone therefore realized that it would be necessary to have an Emergency Budget, and that taxation must be greatly increased, and even so, large sums would have to be obtained by borrowing.

The Chancellor proposed to increase direct taxation, that is income tax and sur-tax and estate duty, and in indirect taxation to raise the taxes on beer, whisky, wine, tobacco, and sugar. He proposed to increase income tax from 5s. 6d. to 7s. 6d. in the pound, which as half the financial year had already passed, meant raising the standard rate for that year to 7s.: he explained that although income tax is at a fixed standard rate, yet, with allowances substantially reducing the percentage of the tax on smaller incomes, and increasing by sur-tax the percentage on larger incomes, the tax is really a graduated one at lower rates for persons with small incomes and higher rates for those with larger incomes; therefore besides raising the standard rate and the sur-tax rates, he proposed to reduce some of the allowances so that all income tax payers would share in contributing to the increase. The increased tax on beer was to be approximately a penny a pint, on whisky 1s. 3d. a bottle, on light wines 2s. a gallon, heavy wines 4s. a gallon, on tobacco 2s. a pound, and on sugar 1d. a pound. Heavy as this increased taxation was, I doubt if it was heavier than most people expected: it was generally accepted without complaint or opposition, though the Labour Party opposed the increase of the sugar tax. But there was no opposition to the increase in direct taxation except in respect of two details, to which I will refer a little later. But the general attitude of the better-off classes of taxpayers—those who were liable to sur-tax—was typified by that of a friend of mine, a former member of the House of Commons, who travelled to London on the morning of the Budget day by the same train as I did: he was—or at least was generally supposed

to be—a very rich man : as we parted on Euston platform, I said to him, “ I hope you will like what is coming to you to-day.”—“ Oh ! ” said he, “ I don’t worry about that : the Government may take all I’ve got : I want them to get on with the War, that’s all I care about.”

The Labour Party proclaimed from the start that they would oppose the sugar tax, and they voted against the Budget resolution imposing the tax, and also, in committee on the Finance Bill, against the clause referring to it : the figures in the first of these two divisions were 113 to 79, the minority consisting entirely of Labour members, with perhaps a few calling themselves “ Independents,” who usually voted with them. In the second division, in Committee on the Finance Bill, the figures were 201 to 137, the Labour Party on that occasion being reinforced by the Opposition Liberals who had refrained from voting in the division on the Budget Resolution. The only other division in Committee on the Finance Bill was on a Labour Party amendment opposing the reduction from one-fifth to one-sixth, of the earned income exempted from tax : in this, too, the Opposition Liberals supported the Labour Party, and the amendment was defeated by 176 to 122.

The Committee stage of the Finance (No. 2) Bill was concluded on October the 5th, leaving the Report and third reading stages to be taken when the House resumed its regular sittings on the following Monday, October the 9th.

So ended the six weeks’ Emergency Session which saw the outbreak of the War.

I have given some description of the large amount of preparatory work done in the House of Commons immediately before and after the actual outbreak of war : but it should be borne in mind that this work was only made possible by the preparations which had been made previously : moreover, it is right to refer briefly to other preparatory steps taken during the immediately preceding twelve months, which had made us so much more ready for the struggle than we were in September 1938. To mention a few of the steps taken : the Civil Defence Act had been passed, and the organization of an elaborate system of Civil Defence under Regional Commissioners established : a Ministry of Supply had been set up and got into working order : the Reserve and Auxiliary Forces Act and the Military Training Act had been passed : the Territorial Army was increased from 130,000 to 170,000, and then doubled, thus being increased to 340,000. The

R.A.F. had been greatly increased, as had aircraft and equipment, and the Navy and Naval Equipment also: perhaps one of the most important preparations was that of providing reserves of food and the measures taken which were so remarkably successful in keeping the people well-fed and in good health. The country had indeed made good use of the year's delay in the outbreak of war.

There had been a certain amount of criticism outside the House (not very much I think in the House) of what has been described as "a mass of undigested legislation hurried through Parliament without consideration" during these emergency sittings. I do not think such criticism is justified. It is true that at first sight it may seem to be so when one remembers that some fifty Acts of Parliament were passed into law in a few days. But on the other hand it must be remembered that these Bills had been very carefully drafted long before, with at least the knowledge and general approval of leaders of all the principal parties, and had not been prepared hastily: moreover, a reference to Hansard will show that discussions which took place on many of them are evidence of members having given some attention to them: on the whole they have worked satisfactorily, and there has been remarkably little litigation about them. I exclude from these remarks the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill which I will deal with later. But of course the real justification for them is that they were essential for the prosecution of the War, or for preventing troubles and hardships at home which would otherwise have been bound to arise had the Acts not been passed—and that without any delay: they were all emergency Acts of a temporary nature, and were only to be operative during the emergency period of the War. I think it was during these sittings, but at any rate it was on an occasion when some emergency Bill of this kind was before the House, that I remember the late Speaker, FitzRoy (than whom no one was more opposed to hasty and ill-considered legislation), remarking, when a member made some complaint about it, "It is not a bad thing that some other countries should learn that this old democratic country can still act with speed and vigour when necessary."

The Emergency Powers (Defence) Act is in a different category. It was perhaps the most urgent of all these Acts and it was the subject of discussion for some three hours in the House of Commons. It gave the Government immense delegated powers of legislation by Orders in Council and so forth, and the Act could never have been justified except for purposes of a great war.

If a democracy is engaged in a great war against a country ruled by a dictator, it must empower someone, or some small body, to act promptly and effectively as the circumstances may require. The complaints made have been against the Orders and Regulations made under the Act, rather than against the Act itself : in other words the persons to be blamed are the Ministers or Government Departments who have made the Orders and Regulations, rather than the House of Commons. I have said the Act could not have been justified except by the War : it transferred to the Government and Government Departments authority and powers which properly belonged to Parliament, and which Parliament ought not to have handed over otherwise than under the exigencies of the time, but which had to be so handed over if they were to be exercised effectively. Human nature being fallible, the persons to whom such powers and authorities were delegated were bound to make mistakes, sometimes serious and blameworthy, sometimes trifling and excusable. Parliament restricted the delegated powers in certain ways, and also granted them for the limited period of one year, with provision for renewing them year by year if it should see fit : for the Act was only to continue in operation for one year unless renewed by Parliament ; so far Parliament has not seen fit to do otherwise than to renew it year by year. But the Act will have done untold good if it results in causing Parliament, when the War is over, to be more careful than it has been for many years past, not only in watching the exercise of delegated powers, but in the actual delegation thereof.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AIR-RAID PRECAUTIONS IN PARLIAMENT AND AIR-RAID DAMAGE AT THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

LONG before the outbreak of war careful consideration had been given to the possibility of air-raid attacks on London, and of Parliament having to find alternative accommodation either in London, or even in the provinces. The clerks and staffs of the various departments of both Houses had prepared lists of books, records, papers, and other equipment which would have to be taken to any place to which Parliament might move. Incidentally certain specially valuable or unique records had already been sent away from Westminster for safe custody. It will be remembered that when the War first broke out it was seriously, and with good reason, anticipated that far heavier and more serious attacks might be made on London than in fact happened, and that Parliament might have to move to the interior of the country. Although it never came to that, it was not long before other accommodation in London had to be made use of. Meanwhile all the ordinary air-raid precautions had been taken and a great part of the buildings on the terrace level, that is a kind of semi-basement below the level of the actual chambers, had been strengthened and fitted up as refuges with airtight partitions and doors to provide against danger of gas ; additional fire-prevention and fire-fighting appliances had been installed, and casualty and first-aid quarters had been fitted up and equipped with a staff of trained nurses and ambulance people. Everyone was told to which refuge he should go in case of need and his quickest way of getting there.

Perhaps much of what follows should (following the custom of the B.B.C. and the Press) be introduced with the words " It can now be made known that " : for officially most of the arrangements made with regard to the time and place of sittings of Parliament were strictly " secret," though of necessity known to a very large number of people ; but I anticipate that before this book is published all need for secrecy about these matters will be at an end. Many people will remember that, as appeared in the Press, no less a person than the Foreign Secretary was on one occasion guilty of a technical offence in this respect, when in a speech he made in Canada, broadcast in this country, he

inadvertently let out that since the House of Commons Chamber had been destroyed, the Commons had been sitting in the House of Lords !

In case the Houses of Parliament might become unusable, alternative accommodation was very soon arranged in Church House, Dean's Yard, Westminster : both the House of Lords and the House of Commons were peculiarly vulnerable to air attack, having no floors above them and containing much glass in the roof ; Church House is very close by and though therefore not in a safer area, was less likely to become a special target—but it is a safer type of building, being a modern strong building with many upper floors which would afford a certain amount of protection to the lower floors. It is a remarkable fact, however, that Church House was one of the first important buildings in London to receive a direct hit which had damaged part of the building and unfortunately caused a good many casualties, several well-known persons being killed : but incidentally the building had stood up to the attack very well and the damage was confined to a comparatively small part of it. A sufficiently large room or hall in Church House to accommodate the House of Commons was quickly fitted up and prepared for the purpose, with a suitable " Speaker's chair," and table and so on : seating was, in the first instance, wooden chairs ; later on benches were substituted for the chairs, which were more satisfactory, although definitely less comfortable than the benches in the House of Commons. When it was first prepared for us, many of us went to look at it. It was very much an " ersatz " or imitation House of Commons : when I went to look at it, Lord Winterton and Attlee were both there for the same purpose and both of them came to me and said just what was in my mind, " Doesn't this remind you of Oundle ? " This referred to an occasion a few years before when they and I had paid a visit to the School Debating Society at Oundle School for a " mock " House of Commons debate : some of the boys and one of the masters took a great deal of interest and trouble over this : they had paid a visit to the House of Commons during a debate to see how things were done, and they fitted up the School Hall to represent the House of Commons, with a model of the Speaker's Chair and of the Mace, and arranged for certain boys to represent the Serjeant-at-Arms in his court dress, the clerks of the House in their wigs and gowns and the messengers and so on. I acted as Speaker, Attlee as Prime Minister moved the second reading of a Bill for

the abolition of the House of Commons, and Winterton as Leader of the Opposition moved its rejection ; we had a most amusing debate in which the Prime Minister's Bill was defeated and the Leader of the Opposition following the customary practice, amid the cheers of his supporters, asked the Prime Minister what course he proposed to adopt, in view of what had taken place. The boys staged the whole debate very well, including the division and a " scene " in which an unruly member who refused to obey the Speaker was suspended and ejected from the House. This is a digression : we must get back to our subject.

Though the temporary chamber in Church House was in appearance a poor imitation of the House of Commons, it served its purpose and prevented any interruption taking place in the business of Parliament.

Quite early in 1940 it was decided that the House should sit for a few days in this alternative chamber (known for convenience as the " Annexe ") just for experimental purposes and to see how far it would meet our requirements. All the other necessary arrangements in the building had been made, including a restaurant, a smoking-room, and rooms for the Speaker and principal members of the Government and the clerks of the House : the experiment showed that these alternative premises were all that was necessary, although they were very far from being either as convenient or as comfortable as our proper buildings. The need for these alternative premises soon arose. During the night of 6th-7th November, 1940, a considerable number of bombs fell in the river and elsewhere, quite close to the Houses of Parliament, one actually falling on the buildings and doing a fair amount of damage to the Members' Lobby just outside the actual House and to the Public Bill Offices and the Members' Cloakroom. The actual House of Commons Chamber, though structurally undamaged, was rendered temporarily unusable, owing to the windows being blown out and the House being smothered with dust and rubble : moreover, the damage to the Members' Lobby just at the entrance to the Chamber was considered to have made it unsafe and it had to be shored up with beams. When I arrived at the House that morning about nine-thirty, I had already learnt that some slight damage had been done to parts of the buildings, but that the actual Chamber was unharmed ; on arriving at New Palace Yard, I was informed by the policeman there that he had been told to direct all members to Church House. We therefore met in Church House that day

at the usual time and sat there for two or three weeks, till we could return to our customary place. We so returned in due course and continued to sit there until the more serious raid on the 10th of May, 1941. In that raid the House of Commons Chamber received a direct hit from an explosive bomb and from incendiaries and was totally destroyed, leaving only portions of the side walls standing, most of which had to be pulled down. We then went again to Church House, and again there was no interruption in the usual business of Parliament: the Lords very kindly offered to give up their Chamber for the use of the Commons, an offer which was gratefully accepted: it took a little time to make the necessary arrangements to adapt the Lords' Chamber for the House of Commons and to fit up the room known as the Royal Robing Room as a temporary Chamber for the Lords: but as soon as this work was done, both Houses of Parliament returned to the old buildings, the Commons sitting in the House of Lords, and the Lords in the Royal Robing Room, an arrangement which has continued ever since and has worked quite satisfactorily. As regards the adaptations made in the Lords' Chamber, the chief one was that the Speaker's Chair—or rather a temporary Speaker's Chair—was set up at the opposite end to that where the Throne and the Woolsack were when the Lords occupied it, and a table—two tables placed together, less substantial than our own destroyed one, but sufficient for practical purposes—was placed in front of the Chair in a position corresponding to that of the Table in the old House. With this and a slight rearrangement of the benches, and the placing of the Chair of the Serjeant-at-Arms in the corresponding position, the Chamber was for all practical purposes much the same as the old House of Commons.

The acoustics of the Lords' Chamber were known to be far inferior to those of the old Commons' Chamber, but the installation of a sounding board, and I think the adoption of a few other trifling devices, soon made a great improvement. The only other slight difficulty was one connected with taking divisions: owing to the insufficiency of available entrances to and exits from the Chamber, members sometimes could not all get into the division lobby within the time permitted: but this was easily overcome by the Speaker (or Chairman) refraining from giving the order to "lock the doors" until the Whips let him know that all members waiting to get into the lobby had been able to do so.

Another large building in London, a little farther off than

Church House, was also secured, as further alternative premises, if it should be necessary : but there has been no reason to make use of it. Provision had also been made for the contingency of its being impracticable for Parliament to continue sitting in London : detailed plans had been made for both Houses, with all their necessary equipment, to move into suitable quarters in the provinces much farther into the interior of the country : but again, happily, there has never been the slightest reason for Parliament to go out of London. There were suggestions made from time to time by some people that Parliament should move out of London : but the feeling among members of both Houses was strongly against doing so unless or until it should become absolutely necessary.

* The usual air-raid warning signals were always transmitted direct to the House of Commons and notified to the Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, or to the Chairman when the House was in Committee. By common consent it was arranged that except for such precautionary action as might be necessary on the part of the A.R.P. staff, no notice should be taken of the preliminary warnings, but that in the event of an imminent danger warning or anything of that kind, it should be in the discretion of the Speaker or the Chairman, as the case might be, to inform the House and to suspend the sitting till the danger had passed. Frequently, preliminary warnings were received by the Chair and quickly followed by an "all-clear" signal : on many occasions the fall of bombs and the noise of guns was heard without the debate being interrupted : but there were several occasions when imminent danger signals caused the suspension of the sitting (occasionally for quite a long time) and a large number of members then went to the refuges : but no actual damage was done to the buildings at any time while the House was actually sitting.

Very soon after the War started it was found necessary to alter the usual hours of sitting, and for the House to sit in the daytime and rise before dark, owing to the "black-out" and the difficulties of travelling : it was usual therefore for the House to meet at 11 a.m. and to rise at 4 or 4.30 p.m. in the winter, or an hour or two later in the summer : but both the times of the daily sittings, and the days on which the House sat (sometimes only three days a week), were secret : therefore on the Order papers and other Parliament papers, it became customary instead of giving a date, to use such phrases as "the next sitting day" or "the first (or second or other) sitting day after" a stated date, being a Sunday.

Days and hours of sitting were communicated to members in secret session or through "secret" information given by the Whips.

All this elaborate "secrecy" appears on the face of it to be rather ridiculous, and no doubt any intelligent investigator or spy could, without much difficulty, have found out all or any of such secrets: this view of the matter was frequently expressed in the House of Commons and was discussed by members with Ministers from time to time: but the Government always asked (and Parliament agreed) to continue these secrecy arrangements, stating that they were requested, or advised, to do so by heads of the Services, Defence Experts, and suchlike advisers. Though I do not propose to attempt any elaborate justification of the course taken by the Government, I can say that from conversations which I had at the time with various persons, I was myself convinced that the course was justified. Little or no serious inconvenience resulted from it, though I believe now and then a member turned up only to find that the House was not sitting, and no doubt there were occasions when a member's absence was due to a mistaken belief by him that the House was not sitting.

One matter connected with Air-raid Precautions caused considerable difficulty and trouble, namely fire-watching. I can write quite impartially on the subject, because I was exempt from any voluntary or compulsory duty of this kind on account of (among other reasons) age. Also I have special knowledge of the matter owing to the fact that during most of the time when the difficulties were under discussion, I was acting Speaker, the Speaker being absent in the country owing to illness; and as representing the House of Commons in conjunction with the Lord Chancellor as Speaker of, and representing, the House of Lords, I had to deal with fire-watching arrangements at the Houses of Parliament.

Fire-watching, at first voluntary, was subsequently made to some extent and in some directions compulsory. Fire-watching of the Houses of Parliament was not in any way compulsory for Members of Parliament or the staff. The Ministry of Home Security, however, expressed the view that this duty should be performed by members and the staff: the House of Commons has always in war-time been careful to avoid, as far as practicable, claiming for its members any special privileges or any exemptions from liabilities placed upon other subjects, and an attempt was made to comply with the wishes of the Ministry. But the matter

was one of great difficulty for a variety of reasons. In the first place fire-watching of the Houses of Parliament presented unusual problems and required a far greater number of watchers in proportion to the area concerned than probably any other large building or collection of buildings in London: the roofs were of many and various kinds and of many different levels, and views were often obstructed by small spires, domes, or ornamental features: climbing about on these roofs in daylight and under the best of circumstances is not an easy matter for anyone not physically active, and to do so in darkness, or even semi-darkness, is positively dangerous for any but active and vigorous people, with, among other things, good eyesight and good nerves. This meant that a considerable number of members (and of the staff also), in addition to those over sixty-five, had necessarily to be regarded as "exempt." Thus the number who could be regarded as potentially available was scarcely sufficient for the purpose. In addition to that, the duties of members in their constituencies (a matter of more than usual importance during this time of war) and elsewhere out of London meant that the number who could be expected to do these duties in London was further reduced. The fact was that the effective fire-watching of the Houses of Parliament could not be done by those connected with or working on the premises, without outside help.

It would not be right to find fault with the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security: he was hard up for man-power for Civil Defence and he naturally and properly did not want to embarrass those whose duty it was to maintain at the highest possible figure the number of men for active service in the fighting forces. But I think he—and probably even more, his departmental advisers—did not realize either the extraordinary difficulties of this particular piece of fire-watching work, or the genuine shortage of those available for voluntarily carrying it out in the way in which it could be and was done on other large buildings: but he made a very pressing appeal to—some said he "lectured"—the House on the subject: at his request the Lord Chancellor and I took steps to bring the need for voluntary workers to the attention of the members and the staff of both Houses: the Lord Chancellor and I, with our respective advisers, and the Chairman and members of the joint A.R.P. Committee of the two Houses, with the view of doing everything possible, had several meetings. But all our efforts failed to show how the task could be efficiently carried out without further assistance

from other quarters: moreover, our efforts and discussions brought home to me the very urgent need for the fire-precautions being immediately supplemented, with the result that I thought it my duty to write plainly and somewhat forcibly to the Home Secretary on the subject and to call his attention to the ancient privileges of the Commons regarding their place of meeting. I felt in a slightly difficult position as being only *acting* Speaker, in the absence of the Speaker: he had for some weeks been ill at his private house near Henley: he was still confined to his house and forbidden by his medical advisers to come to London, but he was quite able to attend to a business matter in case of need: therefore I telephoned and spoke to him on this subject, and arranged to drive over and see him at his house next day. I submitted to him the letter I was proposing to send to the Home Secretary and he entirely approved it without alteration: I never had much doubt but that he would approve it, but his approval was a comfort to me, and relieved me of any fear of being said to have taken too much upon me. The matter was taken up by the Chairman of the Joint A.R.P. Committee of the two Houses (Colonel Clifton Brown, now the Speaker); the Home Secretary, in conjunction with the Ministry of Works, did his best to deal with the problem, and arrangements were made which I believe were regarded by the A.R.P. Committee as reasonably satisfactory. A number of members and of the officials and staff who volunteered for fire-watching duty rendered valuable and devoted service to the task until the success of the Allies relieved them of this burden.

The destruction of the House of Commons was—from a sentimental point of view—one of the most regrettable of the instances of destruction of important public buildings: it was generally regarded by present and past members of the House as a tragically sad event, especially by those who, like myself, had spent many of the best years of their life as regular attendants at the sittings of the House. Some few days after it happened, I went to look at the ruins: the “Aye” voting lobby on the south side of the Chamber was still standing, otherwise, except for portions of the outside walls, all that remained was a mass of broken masonry rubble ashes and tangled remnants of metal railings. It was a sad and moving sight to stand and look at these remains of the historic Chamber in which one had spent such long hours for so many years, often happy hours, and usually interesting: one recalled the many great events and great debates at which one had been present, one’s own little successes and failures,

hopes and disappointments and above all, perhaps, the many distinguished members and the many personal friends whose presence in their accustomed seats was a vivid memory. In normal times there were in the lobbies of the House many historical relics of great interest and value, such as specimens of the old Manuscript Journals of the House, large collections of medals and certain old medals of special importance, and the old key to the vaults of the old House of Commons destroyed in the fire of 1834. These had been removed for safe custody when, or shortly before, the War broke out, and therefore escaped destruction.

The clearance—or comparative clearance—of the site which was carried out as soon as reasonably practicable was a lengthy, troublesome, and expensive piece of work, owing largely to the destroyed building having stood almost like an island, surrounded by other buildings: powerful large cranes had to be set up to raise and lift out into the open the heavy masses of stone and masonry.

As soon as practicable the House will be rebuilt: the form of the new House has naturally been the subject of much consideration and discussion, and a Committee set up to go into the matter has recommended that the new House should be as nearly as possible a replica in all essential respects of the former one, with perhaps some slight alterations in the galleries providing a little more accommodation there. This is, I think, in accordance with the wishes of most members and certainly, as far as I have been able to ascertain, of all the older members and past members of the House. It goes without saying that sentimental considerations would strongly favour this course: but there are many far more weighty arguments in its favour. The interior form and the seating arrangements, which were identical with those of the older House destroyed in the fire of 1834 and used for some four centuries before that, are very different from those of Parliamentary chambers in other great countries and dominions, but far more suitable to the British House of Commons: they are not without Constitutional influence and effect: that political parties should be in different parts of the Chamber and facing each other is convenient, and an arrangement better suited to our political system and methods than (for example) the semi-circular form adopted in so many cases, where the seating arrangements tend to more indefinite delimitation of parties: and for a large debating assembly there is much to be said in favour of individual members

not being provided with spacious tables, desks, or lockers at their seats : the form and style of our debates, not excelled I believe in any Parliament in the world, is largely a result of, and somewhat depends upon, this and the method of seating. As to size, I think all members would agree that for all ordinary sittings the size is about as convenient as could be : it is true that it is too small to accommodate comfortably the whole number of members : but on the comparatively rare occasions on which anywhere near the total number are present, it is possible for all of them to get in without any great physical discomfort : I have never known an occasion when a member could not get in, and I have certainly been present on a large number of occasions on which every member attended who could possibly do so.

As regards acoustics, the old House was very good on the floor of the House—so good indeed that members got into a habit of speaking in a quiet, conversational tone, which often lead to cries of “ Speak up ” when a speaker’s voice and diction was not very distinct. In the Strangers’ Galleries, I know, it was often difficult to hear. But when the House was built between 1830 and 1840, comparatively little was known about acoustics, and it was largely a matter of chance whether any particular building would be good or bad for speaking or hearing. With all the knowledge that has been gained since the advent of wireless broadcasting, and from recent building research, it should not be difficult to construct a replica of the old Chamber which should be quite satisfactory in this respect.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE APPOINTMENT OF WINSTON CHURCHILL AS PRIME MINISTER IN MAY, 1940 ¹

ON the 7th and 8th May, 1940, there took place in the House of Commons a debate of momentous importance, for it was the debate which brought about the appointment of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister.

Apart from that great result, it was an instructive and interesting debate in many ways, and deserves careful attention from all students of Parliamentary History. To those unacquainted with the House of Commons, it will be in many ways remarkable: the motion was the purely formal one "that this House do now adjourn": during the first day, no one anticipated that there would be any division: on the second day (when it had been made clear that there would be a division intended as a protest against the Government) it ended in a division showing a majority for the Government of 81 (281 to 200). Yet two days later, on 10th May, Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, resigned: his colleague the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, formed a new Government with Chamberlain as an important member, and on the 13th the House, specially summoned by telegram for an emergency sitting, passed a Resolution of Confidence in the new Government (not yet completely formed) by 381 to 0, which meant that the minority was composed of only the two tellers.

Thus it was an interesting example of how the House of Commons sometimes works—nothing extraordinary to anyone well acquainted with the House of Commons; but it is no wonder that some foreigners find it difficult to understand our ways!

The replacement of Chamberlain by Churchill inevitably reminds one of the replacement of Asquith by Lloyd George in 1915. Different as the circumstances were, the analogy must not be pressed too far; but the points of similarity are remarkable: in both cases there was a Prime Minister who was no new-comer to

¹ In view of the references made to this debate in the course of the General Election in June 1945, it may be well to say that this chapter was written in February, 1943, long before the surrender of Germany, and has intentionally not been revised or altered since it was originally written.

the office : in both cases, I make bold to say, history will rank them as great statesmen : both of them had a substantial following in the House : but in both cases the outgoing Prime Minister, though no one doubted for a moment his sincerity or patriotism, was not the man to lead the country in a great world war. It would be idle to speculate on how Lloyd George or Winston Churchill would have succeeded as Prime Minister in peace conditions, but in the circumstances of the War there can be no doubt that in both cases the country had the right man at hand ; in both cases the House of Commons recognized the fact and brought about his appointment, and both—despite their human failings and mistakes—led the country through times of danger and difficulty to ultimate victory.

In the debate on the 7th and 8th May, 1940, no less than twenty-eight members made speeches : many others were prominent in brief interruptions and interjections—many of them orderly and effective—but others, it must regretfully be stated, were neither orderly nor effective, nor calculated, however much one might sympathize with their views, to enhance the position of the interrupter. On the whole (though, as so often, I cannot help recalling T.P.'s frivolous remark, "What is this House if not representative ?"), the House in this debate showed itself worthy of a great and serious occasion. I heard nearly the whole of the debate, much of it while presiding as Deputy Speaker, and have since read the Official Report carefully, and I can truly say that speakers in the debate were without any exception sincere, thoughtful, and with something to say worth listening to : many of the speakers were men (curiously no woman member spoke, or I believe was anxious to speak) who are always listened to with attention, and I think there was scarcely a speaker who did not represent others besides himself.

Towards the end of his speech in opening the debate on 7th May, the Prime Minister made an important statement regarding a change in the functions of certain Ministers very much in the direction desired by the House, which showed to some extent the view taken both by himself and by Churchill as to the political management of the War : he explained how Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, was to succeed Lord Chatfield as Chairman of the Military Co-ordinating Committee of the Cabinet, and how at his (Churchill's) own suggestion and with the concurrence of other Ministers, he was authorized by the Cabinet on behalf of the Military Co-ordinating Committee "to

give guidance and direction to the Chiefs of Staffs Committee and would thus have a special responsibility for the supervision of military operations day by day.

There, indeed, was a recognition of Churchill's qualities and a shadow of things to come !

The debate, on both days, was really of two parts : one was devoted generally to the conduct of the War by the Government, and the other was on special military questions. There were several speeches which, from the point of view of an observer, require special mention, and which will be referred to in the order in which they were delivered.

Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Roger Keyes, is a man of the fighting services, and neither a politician nor a speaker in the ordinary sense of the words : but on this occasion he made a forceful speech of great eloquence, upon a naval matter on which (whether one agreed with him or not) he spoke with great authority and weight : he was critical of the use (or lack of use) which had been made of the Navy ; and beyond question he exposed one of the great difficulties which then, as before, had been shown to be inherent in the methods of this country in the quick and prompt use of the Navy in war-time.

Leo Amery, a man of great knowledge, experience, and ability, a Conservative of a somewhat independent turn of mind, has often made mistakes but has never failed to form his opinions with sincerity and good reason, or to express them otherwise than lucidly ; on this occasion, while recognizing the step taken by the Prime Minister in giving additional powers to the First Lord of the Admiralty, he roundly condemned the Government Administration of the War, giving his reasons for doing so in a manner which undoubtedly expressed what many were feeling, but could not say so well, and his speech had an immense effect on the debate.

Notable for more reasons than one was the speech by Sir Arnold Wilson at the end of the first day's debate. Though one must resist the temptation to write much of this remarkable man, a few observations are justified.

Educated at Clifton and Sandhurst, he had led a full and distinguished life as a soldier, employed largely on Political and Commissionership work, for which he was specially qualified, before, at the age of about fifty, he became M.P. for the Hitchin Division : one of the remarkable things about him was his immense and tireless energy coupled with physical and mental

strength far beyond that of most men. In whatever he did his sincerity and his determination to learn all that was to be known on the subject were obvious to all who knew him: like others, he made mistakes, but never failed to profit by them. From this speech it may not be easy to decide which way (if either) he would have voted: but his insistence on the need for unity and undivided effort in the War must have had a great effect upon a House which always listened to him with respect and interest. His speech was remarkable as the last he ever made and in circumstances typical of the man: at the age of well over fifty, as a retired Lieut.-Colonel, he had become an air-gunner in the R.A.F. He snatched a few hours from duty to attend this debate, left the House to go back to duty, and before the end of the month was lost, beyond all hope, on active operations.

Let us look at the peculiar circumstances of the debate, in regard to the position of the Government and the Prime Minister. It really commenced with the necessarily incomplete statement by the Prime Minister on the previous Thursday in reference to matters relating to the Norwegian part of the War: it was followed by two days' debate on what was intended to be a discussion on the position of the War in Norway which was unhappy, and necessarily, for the time being, little known: there was nothing before the House in the way of a formal motion, and there was no expectation until half-way through the first of the two days' debate that there would be anything in the nature of a division: but in course of the first day it became clear that a great part of the House was dissatisfied with the political conduct of the War, and was seeking to give expression to that dissatisfaction. So when the second day's debate came on, Herbert Morrison, who opened on behalf of the Labour Party, closed his speech with a distinct challenge to the Government, a statement that it was intended to divide and vote against the motion for adjournment and to treat such division as in the nature of a vote of censure on the Government. When he sat down, the Prime Minister intervened for a minute or two, quite properly, to draw attention to the change in the character of the debate, and to deal with and accept the challenge to himself and to the Government. In doing so he spoke to "my friends in the House," adding "and I have friends in the House," and called on "my friends to support us in the lobby to-night." The use of this language by the Prime Minister, and especially of the words "my friends" (a common and accepted expression in the House, meaning usually no more

than colleagues of the same party), was interpreted in some quarters as in the nature of an appeal to personal friendship rather than to the merits of the case: it was so interpreted, probably unwittingly, by some speakers in the debate, who had not been present to hear the Prime Minister's exact words. I think this ought to be mentioned with a view to removing an undeserved and incorrect slur upon Chamberlain's character, which no one who knew him intimately would for a moment believe; indeed in the passage referred to he expressly used the words, "it is grave not because of any personal consideration—because none of us would desire to hold on to office for a moment longer than we retained the confidence of the House."

Chamberlain undoubtedly had personal enemies, as well as personal friends in the House, but it was his personal friends and not his personal enemies who brought about his removal from head of the Government: it would be unfair not only to him, but to the House of Commons as a whole, and to his friends in particular, to suggest that considerations of personal friendship for him were intended to influence the judgment of members.

Of two important considerations there is, I think, no doubt: one that Chamberlain did not realize the feeling among many of his own supporters that he was not the right man to lead a War Government, and the other that past history made his leadership of an all-party Government impossible.

If there was one thing on which the House may be said to have been united and determined it was that the country as a whole should show a solid and united determination to prosecute the War to a successful conclusion: from that point of view it was regrettable, but perhaps unavoidable, that the debate should have taken the form it did, and it was to some extent regrettable and not inevitable that it should have resulted in a division. But the facts being as they were, the debate was necessary in order to bring about the political unity which was desired, and no one can regret the outcome.

The proceedings in the House on the following day, Thursday, May 9th, must be briefly mentioned: this being the day on which the House was to adjourn for the Whitsuntide recess, the business was a motion that the House at its rising should adjourn until May 21st, and then the usual motion that the House do now adjourn, giving wide scope for talking on more or less anything. An amendment to the first motion was moved to adjourn to 14th only instead of to 21st, and the Speaker had some trouble in

preventing members from continuing the debate of the day before but later on, on the motion to adjourn, some discussion inevitably took place on the political position, and was notable for a first class and statesman-like speech by Mr. Richard Law.

What in fact happened in the main debate was that the attempted vote of censure was defeated by a majority of 81—much less than the Government's normal majority, but still substantial majority. Yet the result, not so much of the division as of the debate, was momentous. Chamberlain first made another attempt to broaden the basis of his Government, but when this failed he at once, and without hesitation, two days after the debate tendered his resignation to the King. In doing so he rightly interpreted the wishes of the House in recommending a his successor a prominent member of his own Administration whose name as a successor to him had never in fact been mentioned as such in the whole course of the debate.

Churchill at once accepted the invitation to form a Government. Within a few days—or even hours—and before he could complete the Government as a whole, he had obtained the support of the leaders of the two chief Opposition parties and had formed as the nucleus of his Government a War Cabinet of five, composed of himself, the late Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, and two leaders of the Labour Party, Mr. Attlee and Mr. Arthur Greenwood. Except that he himself was Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and that Halifax remained Foreign Secretary, the other three members of the War Cabinet all held posts which did not entail administrative positions.

When the House on May 9th adjourned till 21st, it was of course understood not merely that it could be but that it would be called together at an earlier date if necessary, or to approve any drastic change in the Government. So it was that on White Monday, May 13th, the House of Commons “welcomed” the appointment of a war-time Government under the leadership of Winston Churchill, the greatest war-time Prime Minister of this country in the greatest war of all time.

I started this chapter with a reference to the momentous importance of this debate. I cannot close it without drawing attention to one fact regarding the House of Commons. In an awkward and difficult situation, it did its duty well: this was mainly due to what has usually been the case in public affairs in this country: the House consisted in all parties mainly of members who were not merely persons of ability, but, which was

far more important, of persons of the highest, most honest, patriotic, and high-minded character possible. God grant it may still be so in the difficult years that lie ahead for this country and for the civilized world ! It is a lesson to the country as to their responsibility in returning members to the House. '

CHAPTER XXX

MY RESIGNATION, 1943

BEFORE ending this book I suppose I must make some reference to my resignation of the office of Chairman, and to my consequently ceasing to be a member of the House of Commons.

From a personal point of view it was a sad and mournful event: but such things are inevitable: and much as I am aware of my many shortcomings and failures to make the most of my opportunities, I can look back upon my time in the House of Commons as one in which I was happy in my work, and in which I might have done worse than I did. I have not attempted to labour my mistakes and failures and nor do I intend to do so now.

I have always held that if on the whole a man's record has been reasonably good it is better to stress those things which are worthy of emulation rather than those to be reprobated. In any event, however, this book, much as it must inevitably have dealt with my own actions, is not intended to be in any sense an autobiography: but when one writes of things in which one has taken a part, it is unavoidable but that one's own personality has to be taken into consideration. I only ask that so far as what I have written may be useful to others, it may not be spoilt by unnecessary references to my own human weaknesses.

My resignation of my office was announced by me in the House of Commons on the 19th January, 1943. Out of almost a quarter of a century in the House, I had been Chairman for over 12½ years—the longest time I believe that anyone has occupied that office since the comparatively recent time that it became a recognized permanent office. At the time I resigned I believe I was from the point of view of age and capacity, as well able to perform my duties as I had ever been: but years were creeping on, and at least I think I can believe that I handed over my work to a successor before age or infirmity had made it necessary for me to be replaced. Reasons which decided me to resign were given by me to the House of Commons, and whatever other considerations influenced me, I need give no further reasons here than I gave to the House of Commons.

It was early in October 1942 that I came to make up my mind that it would be right for me to retire at a very early date. My

decision was made without delay and without doubt : but though I decided it must not be long delayed, there were matters (entirely apart from my personal position) which needed a good deal of thought and consideration. The most important was that I should not create a difficulty by resigning at a moment when my resignation might cause difficulty in the House : but this fortunately caused me but little trouble. For some years Colonel Douglas Clifton Brown had been my Deputy, and I was fully satisfied that he was thoroughly competent to be Chairman : the appointment of a successor of course lay with the House, and I was in no way concerned (otherwise than as again a single member) with who should succeed me, except to see that so far as possible I did not by unexpected resignation place the House in any unnecessary difficulty : from discreet enquiries which I made I came to the conclusion that he would be quite willing and able to take my place, and moreover that it would be the probable wish of the Prime Minister to propose him and of the House to agree thereto. It should be remembered that although the Chairman is elected by the House, it has been the invariable custom that he should be proposed by the Prime Minister.

Another consideration gave me much more trouble. Rightly or wrongly, I came to the conclusion that on ceasing to be Chairman I could not satisfactorily or properly remain a member of the House of Commons. Precedents on this subject were not sufficient to be any guide, and I do not for a moment suggest that my decision in this case should influence others : my own case was rather a special one owing to the length of time during which I had held the office, and to the comparative frequency with which I had occasionally (and on a recent occasion for a period of several weeks) acted as Deputy Speaker and been the acting Speaker of the House : the nearest precedent to my case was the resignation of the Chairmanship by Sir Robert Young in 1931, after being Chairman for two separate periods of approximately a year each : when he resigned the Chairmanship in September 1931, he remained on as a member of the House of Commons, and I see not the slightest reason for suggesting that he should have done otherwise.

To cease to be a member of the House was indeed a serious matter for me : but the position in this respect was made much easier by the fact that the Prime Minister had told me that he intended to recommend His Majesty to grant me a Peerage if and whenever I decided to resign office. Entirely apart from the great

honour of a Peerage and the fact that it would appear to indicate that I had not failed in my public duty, it had the (to me) immense advantage of making me still a Member of Parliament and enabling me to retain such right still to frequent the Houses of Parliament and to remain an "honorary member" of the House of Commons Smoking-room as would permit of my keeping in touch with my old friends in the House of Commons.

This, however, was no solution of the difficulty which faced me in my constituency: having represented it for so long, the withdrawal of the sitting member was bound to be a matter of local importance: a few years earlier, a young man of great ability and personal charm, Anthony Blackwell, had become Chairman of the Divisional Conservative Association, and it was usually believed that in the event of a vacancy in the representation of the constituency he would be the nominee in my place of the Conservative Party. Most unfortunately, and that for many other than political reasons, this young man had rather more than a year before lost his life, through a gun accident while serving in the Army in the War. No very obvious Chairman, and more certainly no very obvious Conservative candidate for membership for the division, had taken his place. Under the existing electoral truce, the nominee of the Conservative Party would not have been opposed by an official nominee of either of the recognized opposition parties: but even in October it was likely, and in due course it became a certainty that whoever the party nominee were, he would be opposed by at least one independent candidate of some sort. The Conservative Association having suspended its political activities during the war, had so far as possible vested all power and authority in a very small emergency committee, and for practical working purposes the political party machinery had ceased to be effective. Here then was an awkward situation: knowing as I did that a vacancy was a practical certainty within a few weeks, I was quite unable to make the fact known, and I had not even a probable successor whom I could take into my confidence. I did my best by calling a special meeting of such as were still available of the old pre-war executive committee: I urged upon them the necessity of taking steps at once to find a suitable chairman, and at the same time I told them it would be advisable that they should pay some attention to the fact that they might at any time have to find a possible successor to myself as member: apart from the risk of my death, I pointed out, somewhat frivolously, that I might be made

Governor of the Fiji Islands, or appointed to some other office incompatible with membership of the House of Commons.

This is not the place to go into the question of the election of a new member for the division: I mention it as one of the difficulties which faced me at the time. Suffice it to say that in due course a Conservative candidate was selected and the writ for an election was issued soon after my Peerage was gazetted: the election took place at the end of February and the Conservative candidate, then Group Captain and now Air Commodore William Helmore, was returned as Conservative member after defeating an independent candidate who stood as a nominee of the then recently formed political group known as the Commonwealth Party.

Before the House met again after the Christmas recess, everything so far as I was personally concerned had been settled as to my resignation: I had discussed the subject fully with James Stuart, the Chief Government Whip, through whom my intentions were communicated in confidence to the leaders of the other parties in the House, and I urged therefore that there should be no longer delay in carrying out what was bound to be, for me, a very painful task. I had myself communicated confidentially on the subject, not only with the Speaker, but with the Clerk of the House, whose advice I wished for as to the form of my resignation. Elected as I had been by the House, it was to the House that my resignation must be submitted: both the Speaker and the Clerk of the House agreed with my view that as I was in no way prevented from being present my proper course was to submit my resignation in person on the floor of the House. This it was arranged I should do immediately after questions and before entering upon the business of the day. But before I did so there took place one of those charming little personal incidents always dear to the House of Commons. It happened to be Lloyd George's eightieth birthday, and as good luck would have it, he was actually present in the Chamber: on the conclusion of Questions Mr. Eden (the Prime Minister was absent at the time) rose and on behalf of all the members of the House, and with the cordial approval of all present, expressed in very few words congratulations to Lloyd George on the occasion and their good wishes to him. Lloyd George, who did not know this was going to be done, was obviously much moved and gratified: in a very few words in which he stated that he had not had any notice of this, he thanked the Right Honourable Gentleman and the members for their good

wishes, and expressed his pride in the fact that he had then for fifty-three years been a member of the House.

I then rose to make my statement, speaking (as in my capacity as Chairman I was entitled to do) from the Government front bench, and from the Ministers' Box on the Table. It was a difficult and sad occasion for me, and for that reason, if for no other, I occupied only a very few minutes : expressing my thankfulness that I had so recovered from a recent illness that my resignation could not be based on ill-health, I referred to the probability that following on the War, great changes were likely to take place in procedure in which the Chairman would be much concerned : I said I thought the post ought to be occupied by someone younger than I, who would have a better prospect than I could hope to do of seeing those changes through to completion. Then with a word of thanks to the Speaker, and to my Deputy, and also to members of the House as a whole, I had spoken my last words in the House of Commons as a member. Attlee as Deputy Prime Minister and Greenwood and Percy Harris as representing the Labour and Liberal Parties were good enough to express in very generous terms their appreciation of the way in which I had carried out the duties of my office.

I did not enter the House again, though I was present in an out-of-sight gallery in the House when Colonel Clifton Brown and Major Milner were appointed Chairman and Deputy Chairman on the following day in circumstances which have been briefly referred to elsewhere in this book.

CHAPTER XXXI

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON THE WAR PERIOD

I FINISHED this book in 1943, but paper shortage and other obstacles delayed publication. Now at the end of 1945 I leave the book in its original form except for this concluding chapter, in which I can look back upon the House of Commons through the whole of the War.

After I left the House of Commons in 1943 I was a fairly constant attendant in Parliament, watched from the Peers' Gallery all the most important proceedings of the House of Commons until the dissolution, and kept in close touch with my friends in the smoking-room. I can therefore record my impressions as to the House of Commons and its doings throughout the War period.

The most interesting and eventful part of that period was the first three and a half years, much of which has been already dealt with in the chapters following that on "Munich," and to some extent in Chapter VIII, on FitzRoy's Speakership.

Changes in the methods and machinery of the House were not great and were for the most part in the nature of temporary, or what may be called *ad hoc*, arrangements made for the purposes of the emergency. But the advisability of certain changes yet to be made became more apparent, especially a code of procedure in reference to Orders, Rules and Regulations, on lines such as were recommended long ago by the Donoughmore Committee. An effort was made by a group of members including Sir Herbert Williams, Mr. Molson, Mr. Petherick and others to call attention to the need for reform in this direction, and a full dress debate upon the subject took place in May 1944, on a motion moved by Mr. Molson, which had a limited, but incomplete, effect on the Government.

Another important matter was prominently brought to notice as a result of the immense number of Members of the House, who during the War held various offices, salaried or otherwise, under the Crown. For centuries the holding of an office of profit under the Crown was a disqualification for membership of the House of Commons, except in the case of ministerial officers, who were of necessity members of the House, and the holders of some other offices. But the law on the subject, dating chiefly from

Statutes of the time of Queen Anne, contained in Acts of Parliament, in precedents, and in resolutions of the House, was vague, contradictory, unreasonable, and if any other adjective can be found to describe bad law, it can be safely applied to this!

For many years successive law officers of the Crown have been unable to give definite decisions on cases submitted to them, and the risk of action by a Common Informer has often prevented a useful person from accepting some particular task, or from standing for Parliament.

The matter was the subject of an enquiry and report by a Select Committee in 1941. The report of that Committee, over which I had the honour and privilege of presiding, shows not only the chaotic state of the law on the subject, but also many of the difficulties concerned with relations between the Executive Government and Parliament. That report advised an entirely new Act on the subject; the need for it has been shown on a number of recent occasions, but this urgent piece of legislation has yet to be undertaken.

Some interesting considerations are brought to mind by a method of procedure regarding proposed legislation, which was adopted on several occasions in the latter years of the War, when the Government issued white papers outlining suggested legislation and initiated debates upon them. By this procedure Parliament, persons specially affected, and experts, were enabled to consider and express their opinions on the main lines of prospective legislation. This practice, no doubt, came about through the Government containing leading members of different political parties, but it might well be adopted in normal times in regard to matters which need not, and should not, be the subject of party strife.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the proceedings of the House during the War was the way in which it carried on its business in spite of, and not interrupted or seriously inconvenienced by, enemy action or the exigencies of war. Owing to the precautions taken and the foresight displayed, Parliament never failed to meet at Westminster at the hours and on the days appointed. On the two occasions on which the Commons Chamber was rendered unusable, the first time temporarily and the second time permanently, the House met on the following morning at the usual hour and in the usual way, sitting in what came to be known as "the Annexe," only a short distance from its usual Chamber. No interruption of a sitting took

place other than occasional suspensions during actual air raids, for comparatively brief periods. These matters have already been referred to (see Chapter XXVIII).

Alteration of the hours of sitting, and the secrecy which was observed regarding days and hours of sitting, has also been referred to (see page 220). With less time needed for debating, no inconvenience was caused by the sittings being generally confined to daylight hours.

As to Private Business, it was made known at the beginning of the War that no Private Bills would be considered unless for exceptionally urgent reasons, or for projects calculated to assist the War effort; no alteration was needed in Standing Orders regarding Private Business, but in practice no Private Bills were dealt with except those for which there was such special reason.

Secret sittings have been mentioned in connection with the Speaker's attitude in regard thereto (see page 57). Secret sittings had been held on several occasions during the War of 1914-18, but they were less frequent and less important than between 1939 and 1945. In the war just over, and especially in the early part thereof, secret sittings were fairly frequent and sometimes of considerable importance. Consequently a regular procedure came into existence and is to some extent embodied in Standing Orders; much of it, however, can be found only in the open, or not secret, proceedings of the House and in pronouncements by the Speaker. The House, when it so desired, went into secret session for the remainder of the day's sitting or for such shorter time as circumstances required, or for a specified purpose, the procedure being commenced with the use of the time-honoured formula of a member "spying strangers." On that being done the Speaker had to put the question forthwith without debate, that strangers be ordered to withdraw, or if he thought fit he could assume the assent of the House and order such withdrawal. When the Serjeant-at-Arms had reported to the Speaker that all strangers had withdrawn a motion was moved that the remainder of the day's sitting be a secret sitting, or that the sitting be secret for a specified purpose. Very strict arrangements indeed were made regarding complete and absolute secrecy; no one whatsoever was permitted to be in or within earshot of the Chamber other than Members of Parliament of one House or the other, and certain such essential officers of the House as the Clerks at the Table and the Serjeant-at-Arms. Peers were permitted to be in the Peers' Gallery, but all attendants,

servants of the House and officials generally, including official reporters, were excluded, and no note of the proceedings was allowed to be made, with the exception of such note or notes as the Speaker might see fit to make or have made for him by the Clerks of the Table for his own purposes: as already mentioned, in order to make known anything which it was essential should appear on the Journal or be communicated to the public, such as the passing of a Resolution, the Speaker was authorized to make such brief report of a secret sitting as he might think necessary. Such reports were made, but will in fact be found very uninformative.

The House was careful to make it abundantly clear that any offence in this matter would be regarded as a serious breach of privilege and dealt with accordingly. It often required especial care on the part of members to avoid some unintentional reference in their subsequent speeches in the House to these secret proceedings, and there were occasions on which the Speaker, Deputy Speaker or Chairman had to warn a member of the need for caution. But it is remarkable how effectively secrecy was preserved.

As members are still bound by their obligation of secrecy as to these sittings, I have no more to say about them. But it has lately been suggested that members may be relieved from this obligation. It may be well that this should be done when the need for secrecy is over, and so members may be free from inadvertently committing a technical offence of no serious moment. But if that be done, it should be remembered that no records were made, and so any accounts of such proceedings depend mainly upon memory, which is often unreliable.

In conclusion one other matter may be mentioned. In 1942-3 a Select Committee enquired into the care and custody of records and papers belonging to the House. This matter first arose through the urgent need for waste paper for munitions; in the result much paper was disposed of for pulping and, subject to some slight work done on the Committee's recommendation, the arrangements for care and custody of papers and records to be preserved was thought to be satisfactory. I was Chairman of this Select Committee also during most of its existence: but its work was not quite finished when I left the House of Commons and thus ceased to be a member of the committee.

INDEX

- Abdication, The, 139, 182 *et seq.*
 Abnormal Importations Customs Duties Bill (Anti-dumping Bill), 160
 Acquisition of Land Bill, 1919, 13
 Adamson, William, M.P., 15
 Addison, Christopher, M.P. (Viscount Addison), 156
 Admonition of a Member, 54
 Aga Khan, H.H. the, 125
 Agreement to differ, 153, 161
 Air Raids, 216, 218, 239, 240
 Albania (invasion of), 202
 Alverstone, Lord, 4
 America, Visit to, 1925, 97
 Amery, L. S., M.P., 136
 Amulree, Lord, 144
 "Annexe " House of Commons, 217, 239
 Asquith, H. H., M.P. (Earl of Oxford & Asquith), 17, 21, 96, 226
 Astor, Viscountess, M.P., 89
 Attlee, C. R., M.P., 71, 184, 186, 195, 203, 210, 217, 231
 Baldwin, Stanley, M.P. (Earl Baldwin of Bewdley), 26, 69, 73, 92, 93, 94, 103, 149, 150, 182 *et seq.*
 Balfour, A. J., M.P. (Earl Balfour), 7, 21
 Balfour, George, M.P., 143
 Banbury, Sir Frederick, M.P. (Lord Banbury), 21, 26, 88
 Bank of England, 143, 154-67
 Baroda, H.H. the Maharajah of, 124
 Barr, Revd. James, M.P., 104
 Beer Duty Amendment, not moved, 164
 Bennett, Sir Ernest, M.P., 6
 Berchtesgaden, 192
 Betterton, H., M.P. (Lord Rushcliffe), 6
 Bevan, Aneurin, M.P., 156
 Birkenhead Act (*see* Law of Property Act)
 Birkenhead, Earl of (F. E. Smith, M.P.), 5, 34, 41, 124
 Black Rod, 59
 Blackwell, Anthony, 235
 Blundell, Francis, M.P., 100, 105
 Blunt, Dr. (Bishop of Bradford), 183
 Bonnet, M., 193
 Boscawen, Sir A. Griffith, Bt., M.P., 5, 90
 Bottomley, Horatio, M.P., 23
 Bourne, Capt. R., M.P., 77, 78, 128, 164, 174
 Bowerman, C. W., M.P., 50
 Bowyer, Sir George, M.P. (Lord Denham), 102
 Boyd-Carpenter, Sir Archibald, M.P., 3
 Brabazon, Col. Moore, M.P. (Lord Brabazon of Tara), 120
 Bradford, Bishop of (*see* Blunt)
 Bramsdon, Sir Thomas, M.P., 37
 Bridgeman, William, M.P. (Viscount Bridgeman), 84, 110
 Brittain, Miss Vera, 87
 Brown, Col. D. Clifton, M.P. (Speaker), 62, 64, 71, 79, 234
 Bryce, Professor James (Viscount Bryce), 5
 Buchanan, George, M.P., 187
 Budget, Emergency 1931, 144, 150
 Budget, War Emergency 1939, 211
 Bull, Sir William, Bt., M.P., 27
 Burford Priory, 52
 Butler, R. A., M.P., 175
 Canada, 99
 "Candles," 131
 Canterbury, Archbishop of (Dr. Davidson), 104, 110-111, 112
 Canterbury, Archbishop of (Dr. Lang), 104, 114
 Canterbury, Archbishop of (Dr. Temple), 64
 Carlton Club Meeting, 16, 41
 Carnegie, Canon, 47

- Carson, Sir Edward, K.C., M.P.
 (Lord Carson), 21
 Casting Vote, 132
 Cécil, Lord Hugh, M.P. (Lord
 Quickwood), 5, 85
 Censorship of Press, 209
 Census Act, Order under, 121
 Chair, Motion for Speaker to leave
 the, defeated, 91
 Chairman of Ways and Means,
 Election and Duties of, 69, 71, 81
 Precedence of, 178
 his Constituency, 72
 Chamberlain, Sir Austen, M.P., 20,
 24, 29, 41, 42, 93
 Chamberlain, Joseph, M.P., 5, 23
 Chamberlain, Neville, M.P., 93, 143,
 146, 159, 163, 168, 174, 191-
 200, 201-13, 226-31
 Charles I, 53, 57
 Chelmsford, Viscount, 20
 Cherry, Sir Benjamin L., 34, 38
 Chiltern Hundreds, 40, 133
 Church Assembly, 103 *et seq.*
 Church House, 57, 217
 Churchill, Winston, M.P., 136, 148,
 159, 171-5, 199, 207, 208,
 226-32
 Churt, 152
 Civil Defence, 202
 Clerk of the House, 62, 240
 Clock Tower, 55
 Closure, 150, 156, 157, 170
 Clynes, J. R., M.P., 95
 Coalition Governments, 15, 161
 Commonwealth of Nations, 134-40
 Contributions to National Ex-
 chequer, 157
 Convention Parliaments, 182, 183
 Coolidge, President, 98
 Cooper, A. Duff, M.P., 196, 197
 Cosgrave, President, 133
 Cripps, Sir Stafford, K.C., M.P., 135,
 136
 Crookshank, Capt. H. F. C., M.P.,
 103
 Crown, Imperial, Damage to, 181
 Cunliffe-Lister, Sir Philip, M.P.,
 (see Swinton, Visct.)
 "Cuts" in Salaries, 149
 Czechoslovakia, 191, 197
 Daladier, M., 193, 194, 196
 Dalton, Hugh, M.P., 202
 Daventry, Viscountess (*see* FitzRoy,
 Mrs.)
 Davidson (*see* Canterbury, Arch-
 bishop of)
 Deaths of Members, 133
 Defeat of Government, January
 1924, 95
 Delegated Legislation, 108, 119, 164
 Deposited Book, 112
 Deputy Speaker, 76
 Devlin, Joseph, M.P., 18, 22
 Disturbances in vicinity of House,
 149
 Divisions, Irregular, 131
 Dockrell, Sir Maurice, Bt., M.P., 30
 "Doctor's Mandate," 153, 160
 Documents and Papers, Care and
 custody of, 241
 Dominions, 134
 Don, Revd. Canon A. C., 47, 64
 Donoughmore Committee, 238
 Dugdale, Captain T., M.P., 185
 Dunnico, Revd. H., M.P., 68, 69,
 145, 147
 Easter, Fixed, 105
 Ecclesiastical Committee, 109, 116
 Eden, Anthony, M.P., 208
 Edward VIII, H.M. King, 182
 Election Expenses, 82
 Electoral Truce, 211
 Eleven o'clock rule, 155
 Elliot, Walter, M.P., 155, 156
 Emergency (Powers) Defence Bill,
 203
 Emergency Orders, 203, 215
 Entwistle, Sir Cyril, K.C., M.P., 83
 Evacuation from London, 209, 211
 Evans, Lewis, 8
 Exchange Equalization Fund, 164
 Eyres-Monsell, Sir Bolton, M.P.
 (Lord Monsell), 145, 156, 157
 Ferguson, H., M.P., 100
 Fire-watchung, 221
 FitzRoy, Hon. E. A., M.P.,
 (Speaker), 47, 49-68

- FitzRoy, Hon. Mrs., 52, 61
 Fletcher, C. R. L., 4
 Flood-lighting, 149
 Foot, Isaac, M.P., 84
 Foreign Affairs, 191
 France, 192
 Franey, J. S., 105
 Free Trade and Protection, 93
 Free Trade Ministers, 161, 162
 Fremantle Sir Francis, M.P., 6
 Fry, Very Revd. Dean, 7
- Galbraith, J. F. W., M.P., 6
 Gallacher, W., M.P., 195, 207, 210
 Garrick Club, 189
 General Election 1910, 7
 1918, 11
 1922, 43
 1923 (first), 95
 1923 (second), 90, 95
 1929, 73
 1931, 74, 151, 153, 159
 1935, 74
 "Gentlemen's Agreement" on
 India Bill, 171, 176
 George V, H.M. King, 52, 144, 157,
 179, 180, 181
 George VI, H.M. King, 56
 German Submarine, 208
 Gillett, G. M., M.P., 144
 Godesberg, 193
 Gold Standard, 63, 152-8
 Golden Wedding (Speaker's), 53
 Government Amendment ruled out
 of order, 163
 Gray, Frank, M.P., 11
 Gray's Inn Hall, Dinner in, 40
 Greenwood, Arthur, M.P., 198,
 203-7, 210, 231
 Greenwood, Hamar, M.P. (Viscount
 Greenwood), 17
 Gretton, Col. John, M.P. (Lord
 Gretton), 137, 162
 Guillotine Resolution, 170, 171, 176,
 177
 Gully, Speaker, 65
- Hacking, Douglas, M.P. (Lord
 Hacking), 102
 Halifax, Earl of, 197, 231
 Halsey, T. F. (Sir Frederick, Bt.),
 M.P., 6
 Hambleden-on-Thames, 58, 62
 Hankey, Lord, 208
 Harris, Sir Percy, Bt., M.P., 237
 Harrison, Sir William Graham,
 K.C., 163
 Hawke, Anthony, M.P., 6
 Hawkesley, 55
 Helmore, Group Captain (later Air
 Commodore), Wm., M.P., 236
 Hemel Hempstead, 9
 Henderson, Arthur, M.P. (Senr.),
 29, 146
 Henderson, Sir Neville, 192, 193,
 202
 Herbert, A. P., M.P. (Sir Alan), 83
 Herts County Council, 8
 Heston Aerodrome, 196
 Hewart Sir Gordon, K.C., M.P.
 (Lord Hewart), 13, 21
 Hills, Sir John W., Bt., M.P., 90
 Hitler, Adolf, 192-4, 196
 Hoare, Sir Samuel, Bt., M.P.
 (Viscount Templewood), 93,
 175, 208, 209
 Home Guard (Houses of Parlia-
 ment), 62
 Hopkinson, Austin, M.P., 21
 Horne, Sir Robert, K.C., M.P.
 (Viscount Horne), 93, 96, 97
 Hours of Sitting, 220, 240
 House of Lords Chamber, 219, 221
 Royal Robing-room, 219
 House of Commons Chamber, 12
 Destruction of, 219, 223
 Howard, Sir Esmé (Lord Howard of
 Penrith), 105
 Hunter, General Sir Archibald,
 M.P., 22
- Ilbert, Sir Courtenay, 112
 Import Duties Bill, 160, 164, 165
 Inchcape, 1st Earl of, 125
 India, Government of, Bill, 1921, 19
 1935, 170-7
 India, Visit to, 69, 124
 Information, Ministry of, 209
 Inskip, Sir Thomas, M.P. (Viscount
 Caldecote), 26, 103, 208

- Interparliamentary Union, 97
 Irish Free State, 18, 137
- Jackson, Hon. Sir Stanley, M.P., 126
 James II, 188
 Jowett, Dr. B. (Master of Balliol), 125
 Jowitt, Sir Wm., M.P. (Lord Jowitt), 144
 Joynson-Hicks, Sir Wm., M.P. (Viscount Brentford), 28, 103, 111, 112
- K.B.E., 69
 Kennedy, Thomas, M.P., 122
 Keyes, Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Roger, M.P. (Lord Keyes), 228
 Kindersley, Guy, M.P., 142
- Labour Government, 1924, 95
 1929, 140
 Labour Party, 31
 Lane-Fox, Col. G. R., M.P. (Lord Bingley), 41
 Lang (*see* Canterbury, Archbishop of)
 Lansbury, Geo., M.P., 159, 178, 195, 203
 Lathan, George, M.P., 11
 Law, Bonar, M.P., 11-16, 41, 92
 Law, Richard, M.P., 231
 Law of Property Act, 34-40
 Lawrence, T. E., of Arabia, 127
 Lawrence, Miss Susan, M.P., 122
 Lebrun, President, of France, 52
 Lee, Miss Jennie, M.P., 156
 Lenthall, Speaker, 52
 Library, House of Commons, 121
 Lincolnshire, Lord, 32
 Liverpool City Churches Measure, 112
 Lloyd George, David, M.P. (Earl Lloyd-George), 11-16, 20, 126, 27, 41, 105, 152, 226
 Lloyd-Graeme (*see* Swinton, Viscount)
 Lord Chairman of Committees in House of Lords, 114
 Lord Chancellor, 101, 106, 179
 Loreburn, Lord, 33
- Lowther, James, M.P. (Speaker), (Viscount Ullswater), 14, 25-7, 29, 30, 64
- MacDonald, J. Ramsay, M.P., 55, 71, 74, 96, 135-7, 140, 146, 159, 178
 Mace of House of Commons, 44, 55, 61-2, 76, 178
 Maclean, Sir Donald, M.P., 15
 Macmillan, H. P. (Lord Macmillan), 96, 208
 Macnaghten, Sir Malcolm, M.P., 103, 104
 McNeill, Ronald, M.P. (Lord Cushendun), 28
 MacVeagh, Jeremiah, M.P., 18
 Maiden Speech, 13, 131
 Malone, Col. L'Estrange, M.P., 37
 Manuscript Amendments, 165
 Marley, J., M.P., 155
 Marriott, Sir John, M.P., 5
 Mathers, George, M.P., 156
 Matrimonial Causes Bill, 17, 82
 Maxton, James, M.P., 187, 195
 May Economy Committee, 141, 143
 May, Sir George, 141
 Mayo, Miss Winifred, 87
 Message, from the King, 147, 185
 Micklem, N., K.C., M.P., 6
 Mildmay, Col. F. B., M.P. (Lord Mildmay of Flete), 29
 Milner, Major, James, M.P., 71, 237
 Ministers' Powers, Committee on (*see* Donoughmore Committee)
 Mitchell, Rosslyn, M.P., 111
 Money Resolutions, 162
 Molson, H., M.P., 238
 Montagu, Edwin, M.P., 19
 Mosley, Sir Oswald, Bt., M.P., 155
 Mount Vernon, U.S.A., 98
 Munich, 191
 Mussolini, 194, 196
- National Economy Bill, 151
 National Government, 144, 159
 Nawanagur, H.H., the Jam Sahib of, 124
 Nehru, Pundit Jawarhalal, 126
 Nervousness in Speaking, 3

- New Prayer Book, 109 *et seq*
 Nightingale, General, 127
 Northern Ireland, 102
 Nunn, W., M.P., 130
 Nuremberg, 192
- O'Connor, Sir Terence, K.C., M.P., 155
 O'Connor, T. P., M.P., 18, 19, 85
 Offices under the Crown, 238
 Okes, Revd. Richard, D.D., 1
 Oman, Sir Charles, M.P., 5, 137
 Orders in Council, 163, 164 (*see* Statutory Orders, Rules and Regulations)
 Ormsby-Gore, W. G. A., M.P., 180
 Ottawa Agreements, 162
 Oundle School, 217
 Oxford Members, Dinner of, 21
 Oxford University Unionist Club, 5
- Papal Gold Medal, 105
 Parliamentary Agreements, 176
 Parnell Commission, 4
 Pease, H. Pike, M.P. (Lord Daryngton), 23, 26
 Petherick, M., M.P., 238
 Pictures in Houses of Parliament, 92
 Pius XI, Pope, 105, 106
 Police, 149
 Pollock, Sir Ernest, M.P. (Lord Hanworth), 26
 Poole, Sir Reginald, 189
 Powers of Speaker and Chairman, 75
 Prague, 193
 Prayers in the House, 44 *et seq.*
 Pretyman, E. G., M.P., 37, 41
 Previous Question, Moving the, 71
 Princes, Chamber of, India, 174
 Private Bill Legislation, 70, 76, 80, 112, 240
 Private Members Bills, 101 *et seq.*
 Procedure, War-time changes in, 238
 Protection and Free Trade, 93
- Questionnaires, to candidates at elections, 11
- Rankeillour, Lord (James Hope), 6, 26, 49, 50, 69, 73
 Rawlinson, J. F. P., K.C., M.P., 84
 Re-calls of the House, 142
 Reed, Sir David, Bt., M.P., 103
 Re-organization Areas Measure, 115 *sqq.*
 Resignations of Chairman, 69, 74, 147, 233
 Rhondda, Viscountess, 87
 Riddell, Lord, 143
 Roche, Lord, 6
 Roman Catholic Relief Bill, 100
 Rome, 105
 Roosevelt, President Franklin, 48
 Root, Elihu, 98
 Rothenstein, Sir William, 32
 Royal Message, 147
 Rulings by Speaker, 92, 122
 Rulings by Chairman of Ways and Means, 162, 163, 165
 Runciman, Viscount, 191, 193
 Rushcliffe, Lord (*see* Betterton)
 Russell-Wells, Sir Sydney, M.P., 84
- St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, 32, 47-64
 St. Paul's Cathedral, 20, 48
 St. Stephen's Club, 22
 St. Stephen's Crypt Chapel, 32, 46
 Saklatvala, S., M.P., 97
 Samuel, Sir Herbert, M.P. (Viscount Samuel), 143, 144, 146, 149, 153
 Samuel, Samuel, M.P., 125
 Sanders, Sir Robert, M.P. (Lord Bayford), 50
 Sankey, Viscount, 144, 179
 Scott, Sir Leslie, K.C., M.P., 36
 Secret Sitzings, 57
 Serjeant-at-Arms, 46, 55, 57, 240
 Shanghai, 106
 Shaw, Col. McInnes, M.P., 103
 Silver Jubilee, 178
 Simmonds, Sir Oliver, M.P., 149
 Simon, Sir John, K.C., M.P. (Viscount Simon), 6, 152, 160, 192, 194, 198, 211
 Simonite Liberals, 153
 Simpson, Mrs., 184